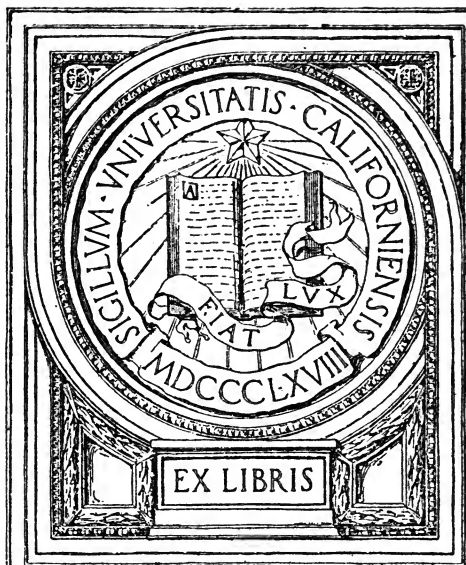


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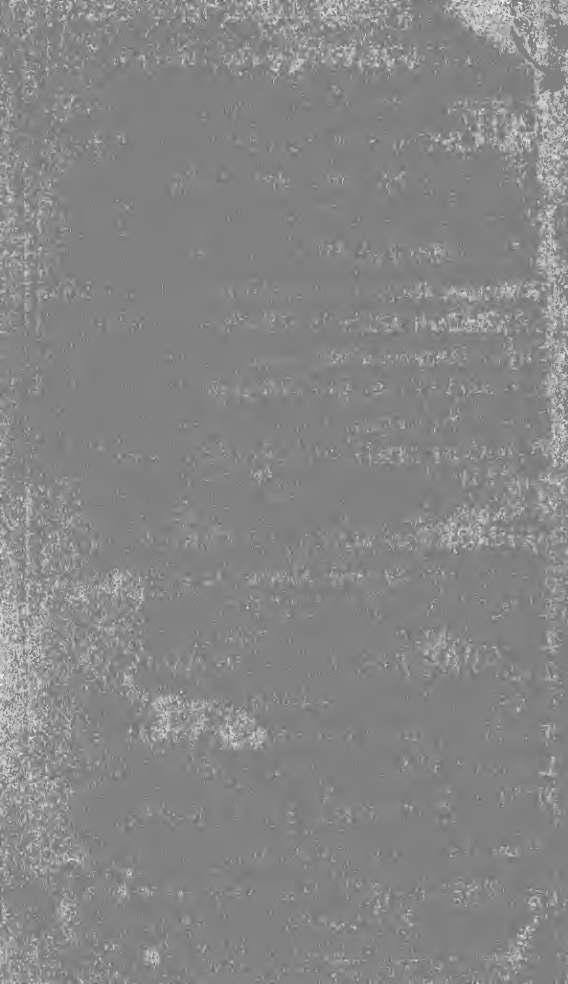
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P R E F A C E.

THE substance of the following volume was delivered before the Leeds Mechanics' Institute and Literary Society, as a lecture; and is now presented as such, with additions and emendations. It is to be regarded therefore, not as a professed Life of Elliott, but as a mere sketch of his character and writings.



LIFE, CHARACTER, AND GENIUS,

OF

EBENEZER ELLIOTT.

PART I.

Review of Ebenezer Elliott's Mind and Writings.

I HAVE to speak in this paper upon the genius and character of Ebenezer Elliott, whose stormy life is now ended, and whose great musical heart lies still and silent in the grave. And although, if I consulted my own feelings, the love which I bore the departed poet would prompt me to write a threnody over his ashes, rather than a cool analysis of his mind and writings, yet I will endeavour to merge all private sympathies in this discourse, and treat my subject in a Catholic spirit, from the historical point of view alone.

Fortunately, the materials for this work are near at hand; and the poet has not been long

enough dead to have passed into the perplexing regions either of mythology or tradition. Indeed it was but yesterday that I conversed with him in his own house, heard him read his own poems, and joined with his fair daughters in singing the beautiful melodies which, at their request, he wrote and adapted to some of our most popular airs. And when I think of the good and brave old man—with his venerable grey hairs—his kind eyes, now beaming with love, and now flashing with indignant fire, as he spoke of human wrong and misery—I can scarcely reconcile myself to the idea that he is gone for ever from the world. The stern truth, however, returns to me with solemn emphasis, in spite of my incredulity; and I know but too surely, that I shall see him no more. It is, nevertheless, a high consolation to look back upon the noble and manly life which he lived; for he was an exemplar worthy, in many important particulars, to be imitated and revered. He was no half-and-half man, wavering with doubtful indecision between two opinions, but an earnest and sincere, if not a complete and many-sided character. It was his way throughout life, first of all to master every subject that interested him, and then heroically, and without calculating the chances of defeat, or caring for the world's sanction or opposition, to throw himself into the arena as its champion. Like the warriors of the old chivalry, wherever

he appeared he left the marks of his battle-axe behind him. There is no mistaking the man in any of his performances; for whatever he touches bears the impress of his own individuality. Of all men, therefore, who have written books, he is, perhaps, the hardest, in a literary point of view, to imitate. Indeed, Nature seems to have cast him in such sharp and decisive moulds that she might be sure of her man, and secure herself from all counterfeits of him. It is at all events certain, that while the mannerism of every other considerable poet has been seized upon by versewrights, and persons of that ilk, and passed into the general currency of literature, Elliott is the only bard whose genius has not been corrupted by these base coiners. Looking at him through his writings, he reminds me of some grim Cyclop, into whose body a divine soul has passed, radiating him with glory, and making even his deformities beautiful. For he is not dressed in the ordinary costume of the Bards, having his garland and singing robes around him (such as Milton and Spencer wore); but he appears in the naked buff of a hard-working man—grimed with soot and sweat, and singing of the “accursed Bread Tax,”—made manifest to him as such, in the empty trenchers of his famished children! We must not look, therefore, in his pages for that external polish and courtly bearing which characterise the highest nobility of

the poetic order ; for there is nothing which he so little professes. And yet he is not without polish, but, on the contrary, he sometimes surprises us with delicate touches, and even with whole pictures, finished in the best style of art. The secret of this rude demeanour—this bandying of coarse names and crooked epithets, which are so common in his writings, lies primarily in the earnestness of his nature, and, in a secondary sense, in that lack of early culture which he sets forth so prominently in his autobiography. It is this rugged, fiery, and impetuous utterance, however, which gives the main charm to his poetry, and makes it, like Luther's speech, a continual battle. I, for one, do not wish to see these scars and trenches erased from his writings. They are the birth-pangs of his spirit, as it burst forth, with mighty upheavings, from its dumb sepulchre, and arose triumphant into life and melody.

In his later writings he evinces more mastery over his imagination and feelings, than in most of his earlier productions, but his wild spirit was never entirely tamed ; and the spots and claws of the leopard are everywhere visible in his pages. Still it would not be doing justice to him as a Poet, if one were to deny that he was ignorant of his art. Few men, indeed, have proved themselves greater masters than he, of the secrets of rhythmical science. Many of his poems are executed

with consummate skill; and his descriptive passages are so true, natural, and beautiful, that they can scarcely be surpassed by any similar efforts in the language. He excels most in this kind of writing—because he is always at home with Nature—and loves her like a mother, with a gentle, confiding, and most affectionate heart. But no sooner do the dark aspects of humanity—the wrongs, the follies, the pride, and the crimes of men, pass over his mind, than he bursts forth into passionate and vehement exclamation, and the calm heavens, and the meek and beautiful earth, are suddenly darkened and distorted with the fiery ashes of his wrath. We see in all that he does a strong man; a sort of gigantic Titan, who hates his chains; in whom the Divine impulses are so powerful that he must speak even if it be in flame; for although he has a wonderful faculty of condensation—both in thought and matter—yet he rarely evinces that subdued power, that central balance and equipoise—which are the highest marks of greatness. He knows nothing of the deep repose, the sorrowful strength, which is manifested in Wordsworth; nor did he ever fully appreciate the writings of that noble and philosophical Bard. He mistook in several instances the artistic simplicity, and the pure Greek beauty, of Wordsworth, for sheer weakness, and thought very meanly of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets. He allowed that

there was merit in the "Peter Bell," but gave his praise grudgingly, like one who was half ashamed of his judgment. He had no sympathy with those high speculations which are for ever haunting the mind of Wordsworth, and are so beautifully embodied in his poetry. He was a far-seeing, much-enduring, hard-working, practical man; dealing always with practical questions, and rarely attempting to soar into the higher regions of thought. Whatever was tinged with mysticism, and did not represent some tangible matter, which he could grasp and wrestle with, was to him idle and empty dreaming. He was cradled into poetry by human wrong and misery; and was emphatically, the Bard of Poverty—singing of the poor man's loves and sorrows, and denouncing his oppressors. This he conceived to be his mission; and whilst the Corn Laws existed, and Labour and Famine went hand in hand together, he had no time for the dainty speculations of philosophy, even if he had possessed the capacity for them. His mind, however, was not metaphysical; but as I said, practical; and his want of relish for Wordsworth as a whole, lay in the necessity of his intellect. I remember reading to him, after a long conversation upon the relative merits of Wordsworth and Byron, the fine ode of the former poet, called "Intimations of Immortality, gathered from recollections of early Childhood;" but notwithstanding the profound

significance, and deep anthem-melody of the poem, he would not acknowledge its merit.—Nay, he confessed that it was beyond his depth, although he afterwards quoted one or two fine lines, which had struck him during the reading, and seemed to haunt him in spite of himself.—This poem, which may be called the Apotheosis of life, and is in every respect a wonderful performance, both in spirit, compass, and execution, is the test by which one might measure the depth and culture of all candidates for honors in the Poetical Tripos. And as some one has said—I believe Berkeley—that unless a man have doubted the fact of his own existence, he may be sure he has no aptitude for metaphysics, so it may likewise be said, that he who cannot understand the moral fitness and spiritual aim of the ode in question, has no claim to be admitted into the highest regions of poetical inspiration. The truth of this postulate is borne out, so far as Elliott is concerned, both in his public writings and private discourse. The fine Platonism of the ode alluded to, finds no echo in his heart; the shadowy recollections, as of a dim and forgotten existence, which flit over the golden brain of childhood, and which to Wordsworth are evidences of an old, dateless, and eternal birth, and which,

—————“be they what they may,
Are still the common light of all our day;
Are still the fountain light of all our seeing ;

Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of th' Eternal Silence ;"—

these recollections, I say, suggest no such deep thoughts and high emprises, to the mind of Elliott, but have a psychological base, and may be psychologically explained. He looked, in fact, for a literal meaning in the ode, and missed, therefore, the whole grandeur and sublimity of its aim. "For what purpose," said he, "should the soul return again to earth, after it has once left it? Is life then, and such a life as this famine-life of England, so loveable?" The question is a key to Elliott's mind, and we can see very well, how many, and what kind of chambers in the Spiritual kingdom, it will unlock. I find the same practical and obstinate question, occurring in one of his latest poems, the "*Plaint*," written, as he told me, one night to withdraw his mind from the pain and agony of his bodily suffering. This "*Plaint*," which is the most mystical of all his Poems, is pitched in the same key-note as Uland's "*Silent Land*," and is wonderfully beautiful and striking. It is the sorrowful wail of a soul wandering in the dark, on the very margin of the eternal shores; companioned by millions, and yet going all alone, into the dark, silent, dread, Unknown. I know of nothing so sad and melancholy in literature; and the gloomy, almost heart-breaking effect of the poem is height-

ened by the dreary melody of the rhythm, and the skill whereby the main idea of one verse is repeated in the next, and merged into some new and still more mournful thought. The question to which I have alluded will be found in the sixth verse of this poem, where the desire for the re-union of the soul, either with the world, or with its ex-tenants in the immortal spheres, is regarded as selfish and profane, because God is all. Here is the poem :—

PLAINT.

I.

“ Dark, deep, and cold, the current flows,
Unto the sea where no wind blows,
Seeking the land which no one knows.

II.

O'er its sad gloom still comes and goes,
The mingled wail of friends and foes,
Borne to the land which no one knows.

III.

Why shrieks for help yon wretch who goes,
With millions, from a world of woes,
Unto the land which no one knows ?

IV.

Tho' myriads go with him who goes,
Alone he goes, where no wind blows,
Unto the land which no one knows.

V.

For all must go where no wind blows,
And none can go for him who goes ;
None, none return, whence no one knows.

VI.

Yet why should he who shrieking goes
With millions, from a world of woes,
Reunion seek with it or those ?

VII.

Alone with God, where no wind blows,
And Death, His shadow, doom'd he goes,
That God is there, the shadow shows.

VIII.

Oh ! shoreless Deep ! where no wind blows !
And thou, oh Land, which no one knows !
That God is All, His shadow shows."

Still, although Elliott could not penetrate the deep allusions of Wordsworth, nor appreciate his philosophy, he held the Bard in great reverence, and spoke of the "Excursion" as one of the poems destined for immortality. He could quote all its finest descriptive passages; and regarded many of Wordsworth's Minor Effusions, as pieces of pure Nature. His love for Southey, "who condescended," as he says, "to teach him the art of poetry," was sincere, natural, and characteristic. For Elliott was a worshipper of Power and Beauty, and delighted in the architectural pomp of poetry, where he could sit as in a vast cathedral, and contemplate the gorgeous creations of genius upon its painted domes. Hence he spoke of "Thalaba" as the most wonderful effort of the human imagination, and more than one of his pieces is stained with the fiery colouring of that cabalistic poem.

His admiration of Byron amounted almost to idolatry ; and he was impatient of all dissent from his judgment in this particular. Neither would he allow you to differ from him, unless you could at once substantiate your opinion, by a direct reference to the poet's writings. Nor was it easy to convince him that there was a single flaw in the rhetoric or sentiments of his noble idol. He would not admit that he was irreligious or immoral in his writings ; and denounced all such judgment as "cant, twaddle, and hypocrisy." It has become fashionable, he said, to abuse Lord Byron—but he will live when the bones of his blasphemers shall have rotted. And then after he had exhausted the fierce tornadoes of his wrath against all such blasphemers, he would quote you endless passages from this poet, all of them full of human beauty, and breathing a fine spirit of natural piety. He had a rich and costly edition of "Childe Harold"—illustrated, if I remember rightly, by Turner—which he cherished with an almost holy love ; for he declared this poem to be the finest masterpiece of melody which our noble English tongue can boast of. Shelley and Keats were likewise great favourites with him. The former he loved not only for his genius, but for his deep sympathy with his race ; and the latter he estimated more highly than any modern poet, with the exception of Byron ; not so much from what he had actually accomplished, as for the pro-

mise which his performances manifested. In these likings, and estimates of the genius of his contemporaries, we see the objective tendency of his mind, and its delight in sensuous, rather than in spiritual beauty and speculative thought.

I think, therefore, from these considerations, and others to be shewn hereafter, that Elliott can scarcely be classed amongst the highest order of poetical minds. And yet he belongs to the "true breed of the vermin," as he himself expressed it, in speaking of a much humbler person. For in his writings are to be found all the elements of a beautiful and æsthetic, as well as of a grand moral poetry. And it is precisely in the æsthetic and moral sphere, as distinguished from the spiritual, that he takes his place as a poet; looking upon all things through the medium of the beautiful, in their relation to the moral laws. There is something Hebraic and sublime in the stern justice which he executes upon falsehood and wrong-doing. He is like the Indian impersonation of Brahm—all eyes, all ears, all feet—keen to see, powerful to perform, swift to overtake. He has one central idea—terrible and awful in its aspect, although beautiful and beneficent in its spirit—before which he tries all causes, and men, and things. It is the Eternal Idea of Right; his synonyme of God. And this Idea is perpetually present in his mind, pervades all his thoughts, will not be

shuffled nor cheated, but demands a full satisfaction from all violators of it. The Titled Scoundrel, and the Mitred Priest, the Bread-Tax-Eater, the Fox-Hunter, the Game-Law-Squire, the Hundred Popes of Englands' Jesuitry, are all summoned before this tribunal, and dealt with—sometimes with an over-severe judgment. One can make allowance, however, for the occasional exaggeration of the sentence, because the doom of his delinquents is always just. Besides a man, whose feelings, as he says, “have been *hammered* until they have become *cold-short*, and are apt to snap and fly off in sarcasms,” is not likely to be choice in his expressions, when he is dealing with known lies; nor have they any mercy to expect at his hands. For poetry, with Elliott, was no pastime, nor even a musical unrest, but a stern and inspired demonic labour—deep as life, strong as death; involving life, or death issues. He had a great contempt for dilitante poetry, and could pardon nothing short of genius; and even then, genius must be married to practical endeavour, or God had thrown away his highest gift upon an indolent dreamer. “We cannot spare one true man from the ranks of thought and progress, in these distracted times,” he said; “and it grieves me to see any man waste his talents in constructing cobwebs, when the world has to be built anew.” For he looked upon the world as altogether diseased; right and wrong had

changed places in it, and the divine was undermost. A hireling church, and a do-nothing, eat-every-thing Aristocracy, were his nightmare of this moral death; and he devoted all his powers to crush it. The waving corn-fields, and the sweet-singing birds, piping their rich melodies in the trees and hedge-rows around him, made him sad. "God has given us food to eat, and man, the tyrant and oppressor, has taxed it!" he one day exclaimed, as I wandered with him, in the valley below his house, "and these beautiful birds are singing, as if there were no sorrow in the world. Ye break my heart, ye little birds"—he added, turning with his eyes brimful of tears, to the unconscious musicians. It was a touching sight; for Elliott was then grey, and bowed down with the weight of years and affliction. He could not find one pure, unmixed pleasure in all the landscapes, woodlands, and cloudlands of Nature; for this Divine harmony which he saw every where around him, became, as I said, sad and painful when contrasted, as by the very law of his mind it was sure to be, with the wretchedness and misery of men. For the Poet had looked upon Nature in so many and such various moods, that all her phenomena and forms were transfigured by the power of his feelings and passions, and had become to him the symbols and the representatives of human thought and life. Nature and man's life were fused indeed into one great whole, and

in the midst of sunshine, and waters, and singing birds, he heard the wild wail of famine, and the shrieks and moans of bleeding and broken hearts. Nay, he took a strange and unwearied pleasure in drawing pictures of woe and misery, and making them speak in a language that melts all hearts. We may thank Crabbe for much of this, and for the gloomy colouring which darkens the genius of our manful and earnest poet. Crabbe was his model in early life, and confirmed the natural bias of his mind towards these dark and doleful subjects. All his heroes are unhappy ; the victims of social wrong and Corn Law oppression. He regarded Poverty as the waste and flaming Saharra of Life, where no flowers grew, no rain descended, no stars shone. It was his extremest, deepest hell ; and he peopled it with horror and despair. On the other hand, outward prosperity and a "Home of Taste," for the working man, were his highest visions of a terrestrial Paradise. These were the two Poles of his ethical and political science. He could not understand that Poverty was no evil ; that it might be a great good ; capable of yielding priceless blessings : he called it an unmitigable curse. For he looked at it with the eyes of a Political Economist, and could not, or would not, entertain it as a question of morals. From a very sufficient trial of poverty, however, I can pronounce it good for discipline, consolation, guidance, strength ; a very Hercules'

cradle ; and not at all, therefore, a curse, but a blessing ; provided always that a trustful and hopeful heart be at the bottom of it. But Elliott could not see the Angel through this disguise of rags ; and his professed business was to denounce it as a loathesome harlot ; the mother of crime and infamy. As a politician, he was stone-blind to the moral uses of suffering ; and neither the public history of nations, nor the private lives of great men, who had been tried and purified in that fire, could instruct him in the wisdom of the Institution, or induce him to regard it as a divine appointment. Free trade was his religion, and heaven was paved with cheap bread, and rich mosaics of golden untaxed grain. From the altar of this enthusiasm he preached his new gospel of commerce, which was to emancipate the world from tyranny and superstition, and regenerate the lives and ways of men. It is curious and instructive to observe the strong faith which he has in the power and consequences of this material reform ; what impossible things he expects from it ! and how earnestly he believes the demon that possesses him, and speaks through his tongue. Had he been born a little earlier, he would have been a leader in the Commonwealth—perhaps a Puritan preacher, a regicide, and Poet Laureate to the Lord Protector. He would have fought well too, at Marston Moor, if one may judge from the battle-music which rings

through his verses. But as a divine guide, and teacher of heavenly things, he has no faculty, and therefore no mission. He is a poet, but not a priest; and one always feels dark and lonely with him, except when he goes forth to worship on the hill tops. The beautiful and sorrowful stars instruct us in a holier lore than that of Corn Law Rhymes, and anti-Corn Law curses; and the poet himself is never so human, natural, and happy, as when singing the songs which they inspire. His thoughts and ways are his own, however; the proper and necessary unfolding of his nature, and should be received and accepted as such.

The philosophy of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham was the substratum upon which his mind was built; and this philosophy, interpenetrated by his genius, found at last a voice which burst forth in Corn Law Rhymes. It was the first melody that ever came from the dead and monotonous mill-wheels of political economy; and is the best result which I, for one, can hope for from that quarter. The works of the above authors, and those of the good Colonel Thompson, made Elliott a politician; and he no sooner saw the evil effects of the Corn Laws upon the industry of the nation, than he began to denounce them. Unfortunately, his hatred of monopoly made him a monopolist in his hatred; limited his vision, dwarfed his sympathies, and converted him into a kind of Polyphemus—a

one-eyed King of Song. The Corn Laws were at the root of all our evils ; social, moral, political, and religious. Destroy these laws, and you will have free trade, and with it a happy, contented, and virtuous population ! Such was the remedy which the Poet proposed for the deep spiritual disease of the nation.

His insight did not extend beyond the cuticle of the world ; and all its spiritual wants and necessities were as impenetrably hidden from his eyes as if they had been closed by the seven seals spoken of in the Apocalypse. But no man living in his time had a clearer practical vision, or a more ready and seasonable wit. He always struck at the right moment, whilst the iron was hot, and sent the hissing and burning sparks around him, with good effect. And thus whether speaking at public meetings, lecturing at mechanics' institutes, or writing political lyrics, he was always successful.

His early poems are remarkable for rude power, and for a wild and somewhat turgid imagination. They remind me of the *Voluspa*, and the *Prose Edda* of the Scandinavians, where the Norse genius revels in unrestrained license, and conjures its gigantic creations out of the tempest and the whirlwind, and the ghostly regions of eternal ice and snow. We see that the wild Eagle has not yet acquired the mastery over its wings ; although in all its heavenward attempts there is much of glory, if also of defeat.

It is extremely interesting to trace the progress of the poet's mind from his first effort, "The Vernal Walk," made in his seventeenth year, up to the publication of the "Ranter" and the "Corn Law Rhymes." He gathers fresh strength at every step, and beats up the thunder from the hard highway as he marches along, giving us assurance that an earnest fighting man is on the road, who means, by the grace of God, to become a hero and a conqueror. Unfortunately, he is too often a Quixotic spendthrift of his power: and, although he does not fight windmills, he often grinds in them—like blind Sampson—and that too, with no practical result, but merely to shake off the superabundance of his strength. I have read the "Vernal Walk" with pleasure, as a literary curiosity; and with the same feelings which induce us to look into the early literature of great nations. It is very singular too, the striking resemblance in the developement of ideas which exists between the youth of man, and the youth of nations. Wonder and worship are the elements of human culture, and religion flows naturally out of the loving heart, in the presence of Nature. Hence all great nations have their theogonies and theosophies, whose origin lies in the very morning of their existence; and hence also the earliest efforts of our best poets have a religious source. Elliott's "Vernal Walk," originally published by Mr. Fowler, of Cambridge, is full of this de-

votional feeling, and is moreover no inconsiderable performance, in the literary sense, if we take into the account his neglected education, and the age at which it was written. I fancy also that I can discover in this poem the seeds of the future man, his love of Nature, his worship of the beautiful, his earnestness, strength, and weakness. The same fusion of human sorrow with natural beauty, which marks all he does in after years, is likewise visible here. It is, however, an imitative and reminiscent, rather than an inspired poem; and he apologises for including it in his collected works by saying, that as the idiot of the family is sometimes a favourite, so this poem is endeared to him by the critical persecution which it has suffered. I subjoin a few extracts, which will give some idea of this earliest effusion of the poet:—

“ Hark ! 'tis the hymn of Nature ! Love-taught birds
Salute, with songs of gratulation sweet,
The sweet May morning. How harmoniously
Over these meadows of the rising sun
The music floats ! O Love ! Love ever young !
On the soft bosom of the Spring reclined ;
Nurse of the tender thought, and generous deed !
Thou com'st to bless thy children. * *
Oft have I passed yon cottage door at eve,
Where sat the swain, his daily labour done,
Nursing his little children on his knee,
And kissing them at times, whilst o'er him bent
His happy partner, smiling as she viewed
Her lisping babes ; then have I blessed thee Love !
And fondly called thee, Fount of Social Peace !
What art thou, deathless, all-pervading power,

That, like a meek, yet universal sun,
 Thro' universal Nature gently shin'st ?
 Art thou a ray from light's unclouded source ?
 An emanation of divinity ?
 No ; thou art God !"

* * * * *

" Here springs the odorous primrose ; sweetly here
 The orchard blooms ; here bees are full of Spring.
 The poet courts the violet as he strays ;
 But Winter cometh, and the flower is gone ;
 And then, saith he, ' 'Tis faded.' Thus, O Man !
 Thou liv'st, and diest ! Strong is thy youthful frame,
 But soon the feeble steps of Age approach,
 Follow'd by Death. Even on thy new-made grave
 Oblivion sits——"

* * * * *

———" E'er there lived one soul
 To worship thee, oh, God of Holiness !
 Wrapt in incomprehensibility,
 Pleased with self contemplation, thou did'st muse
 In silence on thine own eternal thoughts.
 Through all extent thou piercest ; nothing is
 Where thou art not : even in me thou dwellest,
 Thou movest the strings of mental melody
 Which tune my soul to harmony and love.
 Thou bid'st my fancy soar to realms of light,
 Bid'st reason, holy reason, muse on thee
 And in thy works behold thee, throned o'er heights
 And depths of glory inaccessible.
 I, in the majesty of Nature, see
 The greatness of eternal majesty ;
 I, in her smiling scenery, behold
 The bounteous smile of beauty infinite.
 Thy goodness is unbounded, God of Love !
 Here, or wherever uncreated light
 Flames in the sea of ever-vital beams,
 World peopled—as this vernal air with birds—
 Father and God ! thy sons shall worship thee !"

But notwithstanding that these early effusions are rudely and coarsely constructed, there are gleams of real talent in them, and touches of that deep pathos whereof Elliott has since proved himself so great a master. The Rejected's Song in "The Second Nuptials" may be instanced as a specimen of his early skill in this department of poetry.

At a very early period of his poetical career, he was fortunate enough to secure the friendship of the poet Southey; who, on the appearance of his second volume, which originally comprised "Bothwell"—a dramatic poem; "The Exile," and "Second Nuptials," with a Preface from "Peter Faultless to his brother Simon"—defying his reviewers—wrote him as follows: "There is power in the least of these tales; but the higher you pitch your tone the better you succeed. Thirty years ago they would have made your reputation; and thirty years hence, the world will wonder that they did not do so." Elliott's third volume contained a satire under the title of "Giaour," which, strange enough, was a vehement attack upon Lord Byron. The secret of its history is one of the many curiosities of literature. According to Elliott's own statement, it was written with a view to goad Lord Byron into a notice of him; and to revenge himself for an affront which he fancied he had received from the noble lord, in the old Bank at Rotherham.

The party who relates this story, thinks it should receive but a qualified credence. There seems, however, to be no reason to doubt its accuracy—since the original statement was made by Elliott himself; and I have frequently remarked, that he was not only candid in the announcement, but severe in the condemnation of his own failings. It is, moreover, easy enough to see how a young and sensitive man—conscious of his own unacknowledged merits, might be entrapped by the impetuosity of his feelings, into an ungenerous revenge of a supposed insult. Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" is an example of this headstrong retaliation; and Elliott could very well plead it as a precedent, if not as a justification. But in neither instance must we draw too hasty conclusions, from these erratic outbursts; for they are no true indications of the character of either party. In both cases it is wounded pride that speaks, and not a corrupt and revengeful heart. I do not seek, however, to apologize for Elliott's conduct, in this instance; and will merely add that Lord Byron took no notice of his assailant.

"Corn Law Rhymes and the Ranter" appeared next, in one volume, and were noticed in the "Eclectic," and in "Blackwood's Magazine." In 1829, he published the "Village Patriarch," which was praised by the "Westminster," but did not bring him the suffrage and applause of the public. He owes the celebrity which he

soon after acquired, to an accidental visit which Dr. Bowring paid to T. A. Ward, Esq., of Sheffield. This gentleman placed a copy of the "Corn Law Rhymes, &c.," in the hands of the Doctor—who was immediately struck with the great merit of the Poet, and was subsequently introduced to him by Mr. Ward. In returning to London, Dr. Bowring visited William Howitt, at Nottingham, where he met Wordsworth, and made them acquainted with the "wonderful poet of Sheffield, not Montgomery, but a new name." Mr. Howitt claims to have directed Southey's attention to Elliott, through Wordsworth; but this is an error; for Elliott had already been known to Southey, for ten or eleven years. In London, Dr. Bowring shewed Elliott's poems to Bulwer, who introduced them to the public in an anonymous letter in the "New Monthly Magazine." It is dated March 19th, 1831, and is entitled "A Letter to Dr. Southey, &c., Poet-Laureate, respecting a remarkable poem by a Mechanic." Bulwer concludes his letter thus: "And now I think you will admit that I am borne out in the praises with which I have prefaced this poem. I do not know whether the author be young, or old; if the former, I must unaffectedly add, that to my judgment, he has given such a promise as few men, even in this age—an age wronged and unappreciated—would be capable of performing."

This friendly notice may be regarded as the

culminating point in Elliott's poetical career; for from this time his fame spread over the land, and his merit was generally acknowledged. Miss Jewsbury in the "Athenæum," Mrs. Holland in the "*New Monthly*," and various other writers hastened to pay him homage; and Thomas Carlyle wrote a genial criticism upon his writings, in the "Edinburgh Review." In 1833, 4, and 5, he collected and published his poems in three successive volumes, and in 1840, the previous editions being exhausted, he published the whole of his works in one volume, through Tait of Edinburgh. His later Poems have since been published in two volumes, by Fox, London, under the title of "More Verse and Prose," by the Corn Law Rhymer.

I have no time here, to enter into a critical analysis of these works, in their separate character; but I may make a few short remarks upon them by way of illustrating the genius and limits of the writer. It is singular enough, as I said a while ago, that his tales are all sad, and his heroes unhappy. He had studied the physiology and anatomy of human misery, and was its poetical demonstrator. Every painful throb, and every agony of the heart, was familiar to his ear, and he reproduced them in melodies which drop down into the soul like the tears of Music. He loves the cypress and the yew; and the gloomy aisles of death and the grave. I have before alluded to his powers

of pathos ; and it is strange how such tenderness, pity, and deep womanly love, should be united to so much rugged manliness, sternness, fierceness, and valour, as met together in his noble and hospitable nature. It was this mixture of opposing elements, however, which gave strength, beauty, and consistency, to his character ; and although his curses and his hatred were so violent, that he exhausted all the capabilities of language, in his utterance of them—yet there was nothing low and vulgar in all this, and looked at from the true point of vision it was even grand and prophetic,—like the half savage, half archangelic denunciations of the old Hebrew seers. For this hate sprang from love ; from the inmost depths of a heart that vibrated with sympathies for all that was high and dear to man. Hence an act of oppression done to the meanest creature was done to him ; and as if he had been God's deputy on earth, he seized his thunderbolts, and hurled them flaming upon the head of the aggressor. He pleads for the poor, because they have no one else to plead for them ; and it is most beautiful and touching to see him kneeling before the Maker of all the worlds, and imploring heavenly justice at his hands, for these wronged and suffering children. He is blamed for writing political poetry, and his most friendly critics—Carlyle amongst the number—admonished him of the fleeting nature of such effusions. But politics were his element ;

the motive and the cue for all his actions, and literary achievements. His mission, indeed, from the beginning to the end of his life, was that of a reformer,—chiefly in the political sphere ; and he clothed his message in the forms of poetry, and the robes of song, that he might render it attractive, and successful. In later ages his poetry will mark the history of his time ; for it is the embodiment of the wrongs and sufferings of the people, and of that “ bloodless revolution ” which has just terminated in commercial freedom. He has reflected likewise in his verse all the great political movements of the age ; and we see there, in shadowy outline, the mighty pageantry of Europe as it passed in blood and fire before the eyes of men in ’48 and ’9. Nothing escapes him connected with these external movements ; for he is deeply and personally interested, not only as a man, but as a poet, in all these outward and human concerns. His genius, however, is not universal but limited. He has but one die in his mint wherewith he stamps all his issues. He does not, like Shakspeare, give us endless types of characters, but reproduces himself in his poems, as Byron did before him. His sympathies are deep and extensive ; but they are all of one class. His very love is sorrow. He cannot laugh at any time, without weeping. He has wrung from knowledge its deepest lesson, and finds it bitter as blood. His teaching is all hopeless save in

one direction, and that in the lowest of all directions—viz., the political. He lacked faith and spiritual insight, and could not harmonize the distracting elements of the human world; nor contemplate them aloof from their present and practical bearings. The world disturbed him too much, and he was too much of a man to be a philosopher in it. His poetry was not art—although he was an artist—but impulse and passion. He did not, like Goethe, study men and things, nor pass through all the grades of animal, intellectual, and spiritual experience, for literary purposes—or for his development as a complete man;—he had no such ice in his nature; he was all fervour and fire, and he loved the world too well to make experiments upon it for artistic purposes. There is a moral in his politics, and a moral even in his most trifling effusions; and whilst he spares not the classes above him in social rank, neither does he spare those of his own order. A knave is as infamous to him in a fustian jacket, as in an ermine robe.

I have said that Crabbe was the Poet who first formed his style of writing—and determined the natural tendency of his mind to sorrowful themes. He followed Crabbe likewise in the structure of his tales, although he is immeasurably superior to him in imagination, diction, and melody. “The Exile,” dedicated to Bulwer, is after this model—but deeper in its feeling than

anything to be found in Crabbe, and incomparably more powerful. So likewise the poem called "The Letter," is of that household character which Crabbe loved to delineate. This is a beautiful, simple, touching, and domestic tragedy; a common tale, of common occurrence. It is managed throughout with great skill, and contains passages of real and marvellous beauty. Both these poems are examples of the power of genius to exalt human passion and human misery, and invest them with enduring interest. His picture of the maiden Anna prior to her marriage and desertion, is one of the sweetest in poetry, and he ransacks all the charms of nature wherewith to clothe her virgin beauty. Indeed, whenever he speaks of woman, his words melt into music; and violets and all sweet flowers spring up and blossom around him, as if by enchantment. The poem which he calls "Love," is almost an Anthem; and would be worthy to be celebrated as such, in some grand Cathedral service, if it were *perfect* in its representations of the divine passion. But in this, as in all other of Elliott's performances, we miss the highest voices, the choral symphonies of the spiritual spheres. He sings of human love in its relation to the sexes, and to social life, with the lyre and emphasis of a master; but of the divinest love, to which all other love is but the prelude and the initiation, he knows nothing. He sticks to flesh and blood, and dare not trust

the heavenly inspirations, lest they should lead him into mysticism. Still this poem is worthy to have been pronounced at the Banquet of Plato; and old Plutarch would have worshipped the author of it. Let the following passages speak for themselves :—

“ Love ! eldest Muse ! Time heard thine earliest lay
 When light thro’ Heaven led forth the new-born day.
The stars that give no accent to the wind,
Are golden odes, and music to the mind;
 So, Passion’s thrill is Nature’s minstrelsy,
 So, to the young heart love is poetry.
 God of the soul ! illumination caught
 From thy bright glance, is energy to thought;
 And song bereft of thee is cold and tame.

* * * *

But when the heart looks thro’ the eyes of love
 On Nature’s form, things lifeless breathe and move.
 The dewy forest smiles; dim Morning shakes
 The rainbow from his plumage; music wakes
 The dimpled ripple of the azure wave;
 In fiery floods green hills their tresses lave,
 And myriad flowers, all brightning from the dews,
 Day’s earth-born stars, their golden beams effuse;
 Transported passion bids rocks, floods, and skies,
 Burst into song, while her delighted eyes
 To all they see their own rich hues impart;
 And the heart’s language speaks to every heart.”

A little further on, I find the following lines, which, as they have a personal bearing upon the poet and his home, will be read with interest :—

“ Love, ’twas my heart that named thee—sweetest word,
 Here, or in highest heaven, pronounced or heard.
 Whether by seraph near the throne above,
 Or soul-sick maiden, in the vernal grove,

Or matron, with her first-born on her knee,
Or sweeter, lisped by rose-lipped infancy !
Yes, love ! my heart did name thee ; not because
Thy mandate gave the bright-haired comet laws ;
Not that thy hand, in good Almightyest showers
The ever-blooming, fiery petalled flowers,
Wide o'er the fields of hyacinthine heaven ;
But that to me thy richest smile hath given
Bliss, tried in pain. So 'mid my rosy boys
In joy and grief, I sing, thy griefs and joys,"

He then bursts out in these beautiful strains,
picturing his own family group, and domestic
happiness :—

" Blessed is the hearth when daughters gird the fire,
And sons that shall be happier than their sire,
Who sees them crowd around his evening chair,
While love and hope inspire his wordless prayer,
O from their home paternal may they go,
With little to unlearn, though much to know !
Them, may no poisoned tongue, no evil eye,
Curse for the virtues that refuse to die ;
The generous heart, the independent mind,
Till truth, like falsehood, leaves a sting behind !
May Temperance crown their feast, and Friendship share !
May Pity come, Love's sister spirit, there !
May they shun baseness, as they shun the grave !
May they be frugal, pious, humble, brave !
Sweet peace be theirs—the moonlight of the breast—
And occupation, and alternate rest ;
And dear to care and thought the rural walk ;
Theirs' be no flower that withers on the stalk,
But roses cropped, that shall not bloom in vain ;
And Hope's blessed sun, that sets to rise again.
Be chaste their nuptial bed, their home be sweet,
Their floor resound the tread of little feet ;
Blessed beyond fear and fate, if blessed by thee,
And heirs, O Love ! of thine Eternity."

Elliott's longest, and best work upon the whole,

is the "Village Patriarch." It is professedly a political poem; and in the dedication—which is addressed to Henry Brougham—he calls it the incarnation of a century. Enoch Wray, the blind old Patriarch of the Village, is finely drawn, and his early recollection of better days is made to tell, with painful effect, upon the miseries which surround him in the desolation of his age. It is in fact an Epic of Misery; and Elliott, like Dante, had been in Hell. It is a book without hope, and his prophesies of England's future are as terrible as anything in Isaiah. It is embued, too, with the Hamlet spirit; or, perhaps, I should say, with that of Manfred. But it is set in such a frame-work of poetic jewels, that it would be difficult to find its compeer; and for pathos there is certainly no poem in our language to match it. It reads as if it were written in tears. The pictures of rustic scenery, however, which it contains are sunny, genial, and glowing with life. Elliott knows all the wild-flowers by name, and the colour and fashion of their leaves and petals. Enoch appears at his cottage door, attracted by the brief sunshine of the winter's day, and the poet makes the red-breast trill his lay in the old man's ears, perched on a blossoming hazel. Rivers flow and murmur through his verses, and flash in the sunshine, through valley and meadow, or fall with trumpet voices over rocks, in the dark and lonesome glen. The hum of the bee,

and the twitter of the wren, are familiar and musical sounds to him ; and he knows the song of all the forest birds. There is nothing too humble for his notice and love. The weed on the wall, the snake in the grass—the poor, harmless fly ; as gentle Shakspeare calls it,—are all God's creatures, and dear to his heart. He says in his Autobiography, that he became acquainted in his walks with a beautiful green snake, about a yard long, which on the fine Sabbath mornings, about ten o'clock, seemed to expect him at the top of Primrose Lane. It became so familiar that it ceased to uncurl at his approach. And he has sat on the style beside it, until it seemed unconscious of his presence. "When I arose to go," he says, "it would only lift the scales behind its head, or the skin beneath them, and they shone in the sun like fire. I know not how often this beautiful and harmless child of God may have sat for his picture in my writings ; a dozen at the least." And it was by this close observance of Nature, and through this deep love for her manifold creatures, that he came to represent them so truthfully in his poems. I know of nothing finer than this apostrophe to the Moors—which occurs in the fifth book of the Village Patriarch :—

"The Moors ! all hail ! Ye changeless, ye sublime !
That seldom hear a voice save that of Heaven.
Scorners of chance, and fate, and death, and time,
But not of him whose viewless hand hath riven

The chasm, thro' which the mountain stream is driven.
How like a prostrate giant—not in sleep —
But listening to his beating heart, ye lie.
With winds, and clouds, dread harmony ye keep ;
Ye seem alone, beneath the cloudless sky ;
Ye speak, are mute, and there is no reply."

In the centre, however, of all this outward array of beauty, which clothes the poem, the worm of decay and death is gnawing ; and the poet leads us from the banquetting halls of Nature, to a horrid feast of skulls. Misery and famine are everywhere ; and when the curtain falls over the poem—it is as if a dark blanket were dropped down from heaven by sorrowing angels, over some region of beauty abandoned to despair.

The concluding lines of this fine poem, are amongst his happiest and most successful efforts :—

" And when the woodbine's clustered trumpet blows ;
And when the pink's melodious hues shall speak,
In unison of sweetness with the rose,
Joining the song of every bird that knows
How sweet it is of wedded love to sing ;
And when the fells, fresh bathed in azure air,
Wide as the summer day's all golden wing,
Shall blush to Heaven, that nature is so fair,
And man condemned to labour in despair ;
Then the gay gnat, that sports its little hour ;
The falcon, wheeling from the ancient wood ;
The redbreast, fluttering o'er its fragrant bower ;
The yellow-bellied lizard of the flood ;
And dewy morn, and evening—in her hood
Of crimson, fringed with lucid shadows grand—
Shall miss the Patriarch ; at his cottage door

The bee shall seek to settle on his hand,
But from the vacant bench haste to the moor,
Mourning the last of England's high-souled poor,
And bid the mountains weep for Enoch Wray !
And for themselves !—albeit of things that last
Unaltered most ; for they shall pass away
Like Enoch, though their iron roots seem fast
Bound to the eternal future, as the past ;
The Patriarch died ! and they shall be no more.
Yes, and the sailless worlds, which navigate
The unutterable deep, that hath no shore,
Will lose their starry splendour soon or late !
Like tapers, quenched by Him whose will is fate !
Yes, and the Angel of Eternity,
Who numbers worlds, and writes their names in light,
Ere long, oh Earth, will look in vain for thee !
And start, and stop, in his unerring flight,
And, with his wings of sorrow and affright,
Veil his impassioned brow and heavenly tears !”

The “*Splendid Village*,” is a poem of the same cast as the “*Village Patriarch*,” and is another chapter of the prophecies of Jeremiah, although written as a satire. He laments the decay of old virtues and customs, and mourns once more over the bloated prosperity of the bad, and the wretchedness and poverty of the people. It contains, like all his poems, passages of great tenderness and beauty.

“*Bothwell*” and “*Kerhonah*” are attempts at dramatic poetry, and failures. For Elliott is no Proteus, and can assume no other form than his own. His individuality is too strong in him to be put off, and he makes all men in his own likeness.

“*The Ranter*” and the “*Corn Law Rhymes*,” V

which first attracted the general notice of the public to the Poet, are amongst his happiest effusions. The Gospel Tree sermon is a historic record, and reflects all that the Chartist preacher Stephens, or the Chartist orator Vincent, has thought, felt, and spoken in the late disastrous times. Whilst however I can understand the intense earnestness which breathes throughout this poem, I find fault with the poem itself, as I do with most of Elliott's longer works, because it is too literary. He is always at the height of his strength, and one can feel the strong writer in his sentences, and detect his art. In other words, he aims at powerful writing, and his real strength passes away in thunder-clouds. It was the fault of his nature, which on one side was all antagonism, and on the other all love. There is a strange fascination, however, about this short poem, which nothing but genius could produce. The materials are bare and scanty, and there is neither plot nor plan in it; and yet it is wonderfully effective. We have first of all a picture of the cottage where the Ranter lodges—then we see the poor widow rise at daybreak, to prepare breakfast for her little household, for it is the Sabbath morning, and the Ranter's congregation of mechanics will soon await him at the Gospel Tree. Presently she goes to awake her son—and we see her trembling with indecision as she gazes upon the face of her “o'er laboured boy”—half inclined to let

him sleep on. But, she knows it would pain him to miss the morning's discourse, for it may be the last he will ever hear from the poor preacher, whose pale and wasted form is already smitten with the blight and mildew of death. So she rouses him; and he accompanies the Ranter to the place of meeting, whilst

———“ the mountains one by one
Ascend in light; and slow the mists retire
From vale and plain. The cloud on Stannington
Beholds a rocket — No, 'tis Morthen spire !
The sun is risen ! cries Stanedge, tipped with fire;
On Norwood's flowers the dew-drops shine and shake;
Up, sluggard, up ! and drink the morning breeze.
The birds on cloud-left Osgathorpe awake;
And Wincobank is waving all his trees
O'er subject towns, and farms, and villages,
And gleaming streams, and woods, and waterfalls.
Up, climb the oak-crown'd summit ! Hoover Stand
And Keppel's Pillar gaze on Wentworth's halls,
And misty lakes, that brighten and expand,
And distant hills, that watch the western strand.
Up ! trace God's foot-prints where they paint the mould
With heavenly green, and hues that blush and glow
Like angels' wings; while skies of blue and gold
Stoop for Miles Gordon on the mountain's brow.”

And in the midst of this magnificent scenery, under the old oak of Shirecliffe, the Ranter delivers his sermon. After which the congregation disperses, and the poor, brave Preacher disappears to die. But the image of the man never leaves you after reading the poem, although Elliott gives no portrait of him. It is the words he speaks which fashion him to our

minds, and give him such a distinct individuality. I may add also, that the conclusion of the sermon is the most hopeful prophecy to be found in Elliott's writings, and I will quote it here as a specimen of the sunny side of his mind :—

“ Poor Bread-taxed Slaves ! have ye no hope on earth ?
Yes ! God from evil still educes good ;
Sublime events are rushing to their birth ;
Lo, tyrants by their victims are withstood !
And Freedom's seed still grows, tho' steeped in blood.
When by our Father's voice the skies are riven,
That, like the winnowed chaff, disease may fly ;
And seas are shaken by the breath of Heaven,
Lest in their depths the living Spirit die ;
Man views the scene with awed, but grateful eye,
And trembling feels, could God abuse his power
Nor man, nor Nature, would endure an hour.
But there is mercy in his seeming wrath ;
It smites to save—not tyrant-like to slay ;
And storms have beauty as the lily hath :
Grand are the clouds, that mirrored on the bay,
Roll, like the shadows of lost worlds, away,
When bursts thro' broken gloom, the startled light ;
Grand are the waves that, like that broken gloom,
Are smitten into splendour by his might ;
And glorious is the storm's tremendous boom,
Altho' it walleth o'er a watery tomb,
And is a dreadful Ode on Oceans drowned.
Despond not then, ye plundered sons of trade !
Hope's wounded wing, shall yet disdain the ground,
And Commerce, while the powers of evil fade,
Shout o'er all seas,—‘ All Lands for me were made.’
Her's are the apostles destined to go forth
Upon the wings of mighty winds, and preach
Christ crucified ! To her the south and north
Look thro' their tempests ; and her love shall reach
Their farthest ice, if life there be to teach.
Yes, world-reforming Commerce, one by one,
Thou vanquishest earth's tyrants ! and the hour

Cometh, when all shall fall before thee—gone
Their splendour, fall'n their trophies, lost their power.
Then o'er the enfranchised nations wilt thou shower
Like dew-drops from the pinions of the dove,
Plenty and peace; and never more on thee
Shall bondage wait; but as the thoughts of love,
Free shalt thou fly, unchainable and free;
And men, thenceforth, shall call thee 'Liberty!'

The Corn Law Rhymes, notwithstanding their occasional coarseness, are real poetry—effusions from the heart. They are dedicated “to all who revere the memory of Jeremy Bentham, our second Locke, and wish to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number, for the greatest length of time.” Poor Elliott! How fast a hold the spirit of Political Economy has upon his mind! and how strangely it distorts and darkens his vision. One could have wished that he had seen a little deeper than good Jeremy Bentham's philosophy; or, at least, that he might have outlived it; flinging it from him as the lumber of a dead world, through which he had victoriously fought his way. But neither in these Rhymes, nor in his latest writings is there any evidence of his Spiritual progression. He is painfully bound in chains, like Prometheus to his rock, and in the highest sense, can neither sink nor soar. He always harps on the same string—with a Paganinni's hand, it is true;—but one wearies even of the most beautiful variations, when the melody is always the same.

His writings divide themselves naturally into three distinct parts—each of which represents a phase of the mind and genius of the Poet. They consist firstly of the Political Poems ; secondly, of the *Æsthetic*, or those which relate to the affections, and the cultivation of the Taste ; and thirdly, those of a Moral and Descriptive nature ; wherein the poet, by a direct teaching and exhortation, seeks to raise the minds of the people into the regions—so far as he knows them—of truth and duty. It must not be supposed, however, that these divisions follow in consecutive order, or that the Poet designed his writings to fall into this classification. He simply obeyed his genius, and wrote as he was inspired, without reference to psychological manifestation. Whoso, however, will take the trouble to examine his works, will find that they resolve themselves into the divisions above alluded to. In some of his greater poems there will of course be found a fusion of the faculties, which are singly predominant in others ; for in all serious undertakings of this nature, whatever is in a poet will come out of him ; and he is sure to develop the entire wealth, and capabilities, of his genius. But in his lyrical moments he will obey the mood which possesses him—whether it be Political, *Æsthetic*, or Moral.

I will now quote examples of his art, under the three divisions I have named, commencing with the Political ones.

BATTLE SONG.

“ Day, like our souls, is fiercely dark ;
What then ? ‘Tis day !
We sleep no more ; the cock crows—hark !
To arms ! away !

They come ! they come ! the knell is rung
Of us, or them ;
Wide o’er their march the pomp is flung
Of gold, and gem.

What collared hound of lawless sway,
To famine dear—
What pensioned slave of Attila,
Leads in the rear ?

Come they from Scythian wilds afar,
Our blood to spill ?
Wear they the livery of the Czar ?
They do his will.

Nor tassel’d silk, nor epaulette,
Nor plume, nor torse—
No splendour gilds, all sternly met,
Our foot and horse.

But dark, and still, we inly glow,
Condensed in ire !
Strike, tawdry slaves ! and ye shall know,
Our gloom is fire,

In vain your pomp, ye evil powers,
Insults the land;
Wrongs, vengeance, and *the cause* are ours !
And God's right hand !

Madmen ! they trample into snakes
The wormy clod !
Like fire beneath the feet awakes
The sword of God.

Behind, before, above, below,
They rouse the brave ;
Where'er they go, they make a foe,
Or find a grave."

This is perhaps the finest of his political poems, and reminds one, in its spirit, of the wonderful "*Sword Song*" by Korner. The opening verse is full of martial music ; and we can hear the gathering of mighty hosts, and the trampling of armed feet, throughout the poem. Terrible and defiant stand the two hostile armies ; and the bannered pageantry of the "tawdry slaves" of power, is finely contrasted with the dark unbannered "foot and horse" of the oppressed, all sternly met for battle. It is an ideal celebration of the fight between Right and Wrong, which Elliott, in all probability, imagined would one day be realized in the terrible manner he has described. But this song will give no idea of the Poet, in his coarse and eccentric moods ; and as I design to exhibit every phase of his character, it will be necessary to quote the following :

SQUIRE LEECH.

“ COME Lord Pauper ! pay my bill
 For radish tops, and fire;
 Ploughman Joe, and Weaver Will,
 Keep Robert Leech, Esquire.
 You say, shares are fairly shar’d
 Between the high and low ;
 While we starve, this joke runs hard
 On bread-taxed Will and Joe.

Leech drinks wine ; sometimes enough ;
 But then he drinks in style :
 Club-feast ale is sinful stuff ;
 And pewter plate is vile.
 Robert rides, and Robert drives,—
 His feeders bare-foot go ;
 Will is clamming ; bread-tax thrives ;
 And tread-mill’s clamming Joe.

‘ Give’ of old, the Horse Leech cried :
 Squire Robert cries, ‘ Give ! Give !’
 How the leeches are belled !
 They suck, yet *cannot live*.
 Little souls grow less and less,
 And ever downward grow ;
 ‘ Live and let live’ they profess,
 And feed on Will and Joe !

Bread tax murders trade and hope ;
 Lord Pauper cries ‘ Well done !’
 Bread-tax is not yet a rope
 To every rascal’s son.
 Justice is not done, ’tis said,
 To Robert Leech & Co. ;
 Gibbet is not tax on bread,—
 But Bread-tax gibbets Joe.”

Here is another poem belonging to the same class as the last, although it is more serious, and indeed fearfully earnest :—

CAGED RATS.

“ Ye coop us up, and tax our bread,
 And wonder why we pine;
 But ye are fat, and round, and red,
 And filled with tax-bought wine:
 Thus twelve rats starve while three rats thrive,
 (Like you on mine and me,)
 When fifteen rats are caged alive,
 With food for nine and three.

Haste! Havoc's torch begins to glow—
 The ending is begun;
 Make haste! Destruction thinks ye slow;
 Make haste to be undone!
 Why are ye called ‘my Lord,’ and ‘Squire,’
 While fed by mine and me,
 And wringing food, and clothes, and fire,
 From bread taxed misery?

Make haste, slow rogues! prohibit trade,
 Prohibit honest gain;
 Turn all the good that God hath made
 To fear, and hate, and pain;
 Till beggars all, assassins all,
 All cannibals we be,
 And death shall have no funeral
 From shipless sea to sea.”

I will not dwell longer, however, upon these political effusions, but proceed to give specimens of his æsthetic poems. These cannot be introduced more appropriately than by the following picture of

THE HOME OF TASTE.

" You seek the home of taste, and find
The proud mechanic there,
Rich as a king, and less a slave,
Throned in his elbow-chair !
Or on his sofa reading Locke,
Beside his open door !
Why start ?—why envy worth like his
The carpet on his floor ?

You seek the home of sluttary—
' Is John at home ? ' you say.
' No, sir ; he's at the " Sportsman's Arms ; "
The dog-fight 's o'er the way.'
Oh, lift the workman's heart and mind
Above low sensual sin !
Give him a home ! the home of taste !
Outbid the house of gin !

Oh, give him taste ! it is the link
Which binds us to the skies—
A bridge of rainbows thrown across
The gulf of tears and sighs ;
Or like a widower's little one—
An angel in a child—
That leads him to her mother's chair,
And shows him how she smiled,"

It was one of Elliott's darling schemes, to raise the homes of the working classes, and he knew that this could only be done by cultivating their taste, feelings, and intellectual faculties. Hence he exhorted them to ceaseless thrift and industry, and to the study of good and ennobling

books, in their leisure hours. To stimulate them to this course he described in many of his poems the beauty and dignity of home, when presided over by wise and virtuous people. He shewed likewise, that the limited means of the industrious classes, were no bar to elegance and happiness ; and there is a direct teaching of this sort in the following household pictures ;—

SATURDAY.

“ To-morrow will be Sunday, Ann,—
Get up my child with me ;
Thy father rose at four o'clock
To toil for me and thee.

The fine folks use the plate he makes,
And praise it when they dine ;
For John has taste—so we'll be neat,
Altho' we can't be fine.

Then let us shake the carpet well,
And wash and scour the floor,
And hang the weather-glass he made
Beside the cupboard-door.

And polish thou the grate, my love ;
I'll mend the sofa arm ;
The autumn winds blow damp and chill ;
And John loves to be warm.

And bring the new white curtain out,
And string the pink tape on—
Mechanics should be neat and clean :
And I'll take heed for John.

And brush the little table, child,
And fetch the ancient books—
John loves to read ; and when he reads,
How like a king he looks !

And fill the music-glasses up
With water fresh and clear ;
To-morrow, when he sings and plays,
The *street* will stop to hear.

And throw the dead flowers from the vase,
And rub it till it glows ;
For in the leafless garden yet
He'll find a winter rose.

And lichen from the wood he'll bring,
And mosses from the dell ;
And from the sheltered stubble-field
The scarlet pimpernell."

Here is a holiday for the working man, most
beautifully described.

HOLIDAY.

" Oh blessed ! when some holiday
Brings townsmen to the moor,
And in the sunbeams brighten up
The sad looks of the poor,

The bee puts on his richest gold,
As if that worker knew—
How hardly (and for little) they
Their sunless task pursue.

But from their souls the sense of wrong
On dove-like pinion flies ;
And, throned o'er all, forgiveness sees
His image in their eyes.

✓ Soon tired, the street-born lad lies down
 On marjoram and thyme,
 And through his grated fingers sees
 The falcon's flight sublime ;

Then his pale eyes, so blueely dull,
 Grow darkly blue with light,
 And his lips redden like the bloom
 O'er miles of mountains bright.

The little lovely maiden-hair
 Turns up its happy face,
 And saith unto the poor man's heart,
 ' Thou'rt welcome to this place.'

The infant river leapeth free
 Amid the bracken tall,
 And cries, ' FOR EVER there is ONE
 Who reigneth over all ;

' And unto Him, as unto me,
 Thou'rt welcome to partake
 His gift of light, His gift of air,
 O'er mountain, glen, and lake.

' Our father loves us, want-worn man !
 And know thou this from me,
 The pride that makes thy pain his couch,
 May wake to envy thee.

' Hard, hard to bear are want and toil,
 As thy worn features tell ;
 But Wealth is armed with fortitude,
 And bears thy sufferings well.' "

The following is an example of the poet's moral teaching ; and perhaps nothing can better express his constant delight in contemplating the works of Nature, and his deep reverence for

Nature's God, than the quotation of this solemn
and hopeful

FUNERAL HYMN.

“ Father ! our brother's course is run,
And we bring home Thy weary son;
No more he toils, no more he weeps;
And shall we mourn because he sleeps ?

He thank'd Thee, God of earth and sky,
For all that creep, and all that fly ;
For weeds, that silent anthems raise,
And thoughts, that make their silence praise.

For every thorn and every flower !
For conquering Right and baffled Power;
For all the meek and all the proud,
He thank'd the Lord of sun and cloud.

For soul to feel and sight to see,
In all Thy works, but types of Thee;
For all Thy works, and for Thy word,
In life and death, he thanked Thee, Lord.

He thank'd Thee too for struggles long,
For storms that make the feeble strong
For every pang Thy goodness gave;
For hope deferr'd—and for the grave,

Oh, welcome in the morn, the road
That climbs to Virtue's high abode !
But when descends the evening dew,
The inn of rest is welcome too.

Thou say'st to man, ‘ Arise, and run
Thy glorious course, like yonder sun !’
But when Thy children need repose,
Their Father's hand the curtain draws.

What though with eyes that yet can weep,
 The sinner trembles into sleep?
 Thou know'st he yet shall wake and rise
 To gaze on Mercy's brightest skies.

The fearful child, though still caress'd,
 Will tremble on his mother's breast;
 But he, she knows, is safe from ill,
 Though, watched by love, he trembles still.

Lord! when our brother wakes, may they
 Who watch beneath 'Thy footstool, say,
 'Another wanderer is forgiven!
 Another child is born in Heaven!'

"Forest Worship," is, likewise, a beautiful poem, notwithstanding the mixture of politics and religion which it contains. He takes us at once

"Within the sunlit forest;
 Our roof the bright blue sky,
 Where fountains flow, and wild flowers blow,
 We lift our hearts on high.
 Beneath the frown of wicked men
 Our country's strength is bowing;
 But, thanks to God! they can't prevent
 The lone wild-flowers from blowing,

High, high, above the tree-tops,
 The lark is soaring free;
 Where streams the light through broken clouds
 His speckled breast I see:
 Beneath the might of wicked men
 The poor man's worth is dying;
 But, thanked be God! in spite of them,
 The lark still warbles flying!

The preacher prays ' Lord bless us !'
 ' Lord bless us !' Echo cries ;
' Amen !' the breezes murmur low,
 ' Amen !' the rill replies ;
The ceaseless toil of wo-worn hearts,
 The proud with pangs are paying ;
But here, O God of earth and heaven !
 The humble heart is praying !

How softly in the pauses
 Of song, re-echoed wide,
The cushet's coo, the linnet's lay,
 O'er rill and river glide !
With evil deeds of evil men
 Th' affrighted land is ringing,
But still, O Lord ! the pious heart
 And soul-toned voice are singing !

Hush ! hush ! the Preacher preacheth !
 ' Wo ! to the oppressor, wo !'
But sudden gloom o'ercasts the sun
 And saddened flowers below :
So frowns the Lord !—but tyrants, ye
 Deride his indignation,
And see not in his gathered brow
 Your days of tribulation !

Speak low, thou heaven-paid teacher !
 The tempest bursts above :
God whispers in the thunder : hear
 The terrors of his love !
On useful hands, and honest hearts,
 The base their wrath are wreaking ;
But, thank'd be God ! they can't prevent
 The storm of heaven from speaking."

I will close these extracts with a few more specimens from his miscellaneous poems ; and the reader will then have a fair conception of

the range of Elliott's mind. The two which follow are very striking and beautiful, and are in his highest manner :

LEAVES AND MEN.

" Drop, drop into the grave, Old Leaf,
Drop, drop into the grave;
Thy acorns grown, thy acorns sown,—
Drop, drop into the grave.
December's tempests rave, Old Leaf;
Above thy forest-grave, Old Leaf;
Drop, drop into the grave.

The birds in Spring, will sweetly sing,
That death alone is sad ;
The grass will grow, the primrose show,
That death alone is sad.
Lament above thy grave, Old Leaf;
For what has life to do with grief ?
'Tis death alone that's sad.

What then? We two have both lived through
The sunshine and the rain ;
And blessed be He, to me and thee,
Who sent His sun and rain.
We've had our sun and rain, Old Leaf,
And God will send again, Old Leaf,
The sunshine and the rain.

Race after race of leaves and men,
Bloom, wither, and are gone;
As winds, and waters, rise and fall,
So life and death roll on ;
And long as ocean heaves, Old Leaf,
And bud and fade the leaves, Old Leaf,
Will life and death roll on,

How like am I to thee, Old Leaf!
We'll drop together down;
How like art thou to me, Old Leaf!
We'll drop together down.
I'm grey, and thou art brown, Old Leaf!
We'll drop together down, Old Leaf,
We'll drop together down.

Drop, drop into the grave, Old Leaf,
Drop, drop into the grave;
Thy acorns grown, thy acorns sown,—
Drop, drop into the grave.
December's tempests rave, Old Leaf,
Above thy forest-grave, Old Leaf;
Drop, drop into the grave!"

OH, TELL US.

I.

"Companioned each, by all and none,
A mob of souls, yet each alone,
We journey to the dread Unknown.

II.

In nothing found, in all things shown,
In all life living, yet alone,
Where may it be, that dread Unknown?

III.

Oh, who, or what, so dreadly shown,
And world-attended, yet alone,
Is that all-sought, all-known Unknown?"

The following lines remind us of Goethe :—

TO FANNY ANN.

“ As the flower bloweth,
As the stream floweth,
Daughter of beauty,
Do thou thy duty.
What, tho’ the morrow
May dawn in sorrow ?
E’en as light hasteth,
Darkness, too, wasteth :
Morn then discloses,
Rain-drops on roses !
Daughter of beauty,
What then is duty ?
Time says, ‘ Death knoweth !’
Death says, ‘ Time showeth !’ ”

The poem which I shall now quote was sent me in MS., and appeared originally in the “Truth Seeker” Magazine, edited by my friend, Dr. Lees, of Leeds. It is entitled

LET ME REST.

“ He does well who does his best ;
Is he weary ? Let him rest :
Brothers ! I have done my best ;
I am weary—let me rest.
After toiling oft in vain,
Baffled, yet to struggle fain ;
After toiling long to gain
Little good, and mickle pain ;
Let me rest—But lay me low,
Where the hedge-side roses blow ;
Where the little daisies grow ;
Where the winds a-Maying go ;

Where the foot-path rustics plod ;
 Where the breeze-bowed poplars nod ;
 Where the old woods worship God ;
 Where His pencil paints the sod ;
 Where the wedded throstle sings ;
 Where the young bird tries his wings ;
 Where the wailing plover swings
 Near the runlet's rushy springs !
 Where at times the tempest's roar
 Shaking distant sea and shore,
 Still will rave old Barnsdale o'er,
 To be heard by me no more.
 There beneath the breezy west
 Tired and thankful, let me rest,
 Like a child, that sleepeth best
 On its gentle mother's breast."

The following poems may be cited, as specimens of the pathetic power developed in the Corn Law Rhymes.

I.

" Where the poor cease to pay,
 Go loved one, and rest.
 Thou art wearing away
 To the land of the blest.
 Our father is gone
 Where the wronged are forgiven,
 And that dearest one,
 Thy husband, in heaven,

II.

No toil in despair ;
 No tyrant, no slave ;
 No Bread-tax is there,
 With a maw like the grave ;

But the Poacher, thy pride,
Whelmed in ocean afar :
And his brother who died
Land-butchered in war ;

III.

And their mother who sank
Broken-hearted, to rest ;
And the baby that drank
Till it froze on her breast ;
With tears, and with smiles,
Are waiting for thee,
In the beautiful isles,
Where the wronged are the free !

IV.

Go loved one, and rest ;
Where the poor cease to pay !
To the land of the blest
Thou art wearing away ;
But the son of thy pride
Shall yet stay with thee,
And poor little Jane,
Look sadly like thee."

SONG.

" Child, is thy father dead ?
Father is gone !
Why did they tax his bread ?
God's will be done !
Mother has sold her bed ;
Better to die than wed !
Where shall she lay her head ?
Home we have none !

Father clamm'd thrice a week—
God's will be done
Long for work did he seek,
Work he found none.
Tears on his hollow cheek
Told what no tongue could speak :
Why did his master break ?
God's will be done !

Doctor said air was best—
Food we had none ;
Father, with panting breast,
Groaned to be gone :
Now he is with the blest—
Mother says death is best !
We have no place of rest—
Yes, ye have one !

PART II.

Biography of the Poet.

AND now, having given a general characterization of the mind and writings of our Poet, let us take a glimpse at his early history, and try if we can discover the process by which his mind and character were developed. His Autobiography, which appeared in No. 1159 of the *Athenæum*, and extends to his twenty-third year, will enable us to accomplish this ; and it is one of the most interesting pieces of personal history upon record. It is written in a style as unvarnished as that of Gibbon, and contains all the prominent features in his early career, both of mind and fortune. It is too long to extract in these pages, but it will well repay the student for a private and careful reading. We will first relate the particulars of his birth and parentage, and then run rapidly over such parts of his subsequent history, as may throw light upon our investigation.

Elliott was born at the New Foundry, Mas-

boro', in the parish of Rotherham, March 17th, 1781; and was well nigh smothered before he had been in the world a quarter of an hour. His son Francis, who relates the story to me in a private letter, says: "In the hurry and confusion attendant upon his birth, he was laid in an open drawer, which was presently shut by another person, who did not notice its contents, and the child was missing for some minutes, and could not be found. Fortunately, however, he was rescued from his perilous situation, by the same hands that placed him in it, and restored to his mother. Three quarters of a century later, this child repealed the Corn Laws; and it would be interesting to know how many hungry deaths, how many broken fortunes, how many broken hearts, the timely opening of that drawer has saved." His father, who, for his eccentricities, and ultra-Calvinistic notions, was called "Devil Elliott," was a dissenter; and our Poet was baptized by one Tommy Wright, a Barnsley Tinker, who belonged to the same school of theology as Elliott's father, and believed that "Hell was hung round with little children, a span long;" a belief by no means uncommon in those days, nor even in later times, as I have good reason to remember. He describes the ancestors of his grandfather Elliott, as border thieves, who lived on the cattle they stole, both from English and Scotch; and thinks he has made out a good pedigree so far. Of his

own father he speaks in high terms. He was married to an opulent yeoman's daughter near Huddersfield, and settled in business at Masboro', as an iron-founder, where Ebenezer, and all his other children, were born and bred. "I can remember seeing," says the Poet's son Francis, "when very young, the name Elliott, in twisted iron, over the door of a little, low, time-dark building, at the top of the High-street, in the town above named, where my father and his brother Giles, if I mistake not, spent many years of their youth, and early manhood, in serving customers with ironmongery. My grandfather was a man of great natural shrewdness and penetration; with a talent for humour and satire; fond of controversy, especially on theology; and possessed of respectable literary powers.

"I have seen a 'rhymed Paraphrase of Job,' written by him; and I must do my buried ancestor the justice to say, that it did not require a Job's patience to read it. If not very poetical in its structure, it is at least as good as many noted pieces in Pope and Dryden. It is sententious, concise, and logical. My grandmother was a very different person; all heart, sensitiveness, and meekness. The slightest look, word, or tone of unkindness, cut her to the quick; whilst a whole world of injuries could not arouse within her the shadow of a desire for revenge. She had great personal attractions; a

soft and gentle style of beauty; which was sister to her heart. She was a very violet in sweetness and unobtrusiveness, and she had a violet's fate too. She lived unnoticed, and misfortune trod her out of life. My grandfather's bankruptcy broke her heart."

Mr. P. Rodgers, of Sheffield, has furnished me with the following anecdote of the Poet's father. "In those days, when the French were generally considered atheists, and the Divine Right of Kings was an article of almost universal belief—it is no wonder that the Poet's father—who was a Jacobin and ultra-Calvinist—should be regarded with dread by some, and suspicion by others. He was not a man, however, to be trodden upon with impunity. His son alludes, in the poem called "*The Jacobin's Prayer*," to an incident in his father's life, which I well remember, and which furnishes a good illustration of his character. The Rotherham troop of Yeomanry had had a field day. It was getting towards evening; and previous to the dismissal of the men, they were drawn up in a line, in High Street, with their faces to the Crown Inn, while some one was addressing a loyal speech to them from one of the windows. Mr. Elliott's shop being in the narrowest part of the street, and from some cause or other, one or more of the military steeds, which stood with their hinder parts towards his door and windows, beginning to prance, they

were not long before their tails and haunches came through the glass. The old man immediately conceived the idea, that the seeming accident was done on purpose, and because he was a Jacobin. Under this impression he flew into a terrible rage; seized, I believe, upon some offensive weapon, which the stock in his own shop supplied, and rushed to the assault. A terrible disturbance ensued, but no blood was shed, and thus the affair did not end so seriously as it might have done, considering what it was to quarrel with the authorities in those days. Probably, Mr. Elliott's real respectability in the eyes of his neighbours, together with his commercial influence in the town, protected him from similar consequences to those which befel the more unfortunate James Montgomery, at a little earlier date, in Sheffield."

Such then was the parentage of the Poet—and his physical and mental characteristics may be traced, in a great measure, to this source. He had his father's strength of mind and character, and his mother's sensitiveness and nervous weakness. He gives us a picture of his father's home, whilst he was a clerk at the foundry, and before he became the proprietor of it, which is interesting in many important respects. "Under the room where I was born," he says, "in a little parlour like the cabin of a ship, which was yearly painted green, and blessed with a beautiful

thoroughfare of light—for there was no window-tax in those days—my father used to preach every fourth Sunday, to persons who came from distances of twelve to fourteen miles, to hear his tremendous doctrines of ultra-Calvinism. On other days, pointing to the aquatint pictures on the walls, he delighted to declaim on the virtues of slandered Cromwell, and of Washington the rebel; or, shaking his sides with laughter, explain the glories of the ‘glorious victory of his Majesty’s forces over the rebels at Bunker’s Hill.’” “Here” he adds, “the reader has a key which will unlock all my future politics.”—And the fact is worth remembering. He relates as proof of his nervous sensibility, that at twelve years of age he fell in love with a young woman, to whom he never spoke a word in his life, and whose voice he never heard. “Yet if I thought she saw me,” he adds, “as I passed her father’s house, I felt as if weights were tied to my feet.” This is the old story, in a new form, illustrative of the power of love over the youthful heart; and Elliott is not the last person who will feel these weights to his feet, in the presence of the beloved object. The fact, however, made a deep impression upon him throughout life; for it was the first sunbeam that fell upon the dark fallows of his nature, and quickened them into flowers and verdure. From this moment he was a new being, and his poetical tendencies

began to develope themselves. In the yard of the foundry, surrounded by blast furnaces, and half-naked smiths hammering at innumerable anvils, he contrived a little garden of mugwort and wormwood, and placed a pan of water in the midst of it, where he could see the reflection of the sun and clouds, and of the plants themselves, as from the surface of a natural fountain. And this anecdote, trifling as it may seem, contains the microcosm of the Poet's genius; for Nature has no new methods, but repeats, and re-repeats herself in every one of her processes; and the macrocosm is but the microcosm, on a large and complete scale. Combined, however, with this love for the beautiful—Elliott had also a strange taste for the horrible—a passion—a rage, for seeing the faces of the hanged or the drowned. These frightful visages made his life a burden—followed him wherever he went—and haunted him in his dreams. He cannot account for this morbid love which he had for the dark and obscene imagery of death; and asks whether it was a result of constitutional infirmity? and whether it had any connection with his taste for writing of horrors and crimes? I think there can be no doubt of the answer to either of these questions, and I can trace the effects of this morbid taste in his poems. During childhood he had no associates; and although the neighbourhood swarmed with children, he was alone. Hence his mind fell back upon itself, and by

dwelling too much upon its own reflections, and constantly brooding over the mixed imagery of beauty and horror which possessed it, he grew unhealthy and diseased. Still his solitude was not painful ; and he occasionally occupied himself in constructing boats and ships. He remarks, however, that his imitative talents secured him no respect ; and he was altogether unaware that he possessed others of a higher and nobler order, which were one day to awake the admiration, and secure the applause, of the world. Nature however, knew what she was about in impelling him to these ingenious devices of boats and ships ; for now he must go down to the water's side and launch them ; and there, in the midst of sunshine, flowers, and darnels, she taught him many preparatory poetic lessons.

He speaks with unconscious complaint of his "wondrous brother Giles"—who was beautiful as an angel ; and compared with whom he (the Poet) was ugliness itself. "In the presence of his splendid abilities," he says, "I might well look like a fool, and believe myself one. As I grew up, my fondness for solitude increased ; for I could not but observe the homage that was paid to him, and feel the contempt with which I was regarded ; although I am not aware that I ever envied or at all disliked him."

The following passage from his autobiography is interesting, as showing the impression which

the "barbarous deeds done in the name of the law" made upon his mind, even in boyhood: "When I look back," he says, "on the days of rabid Toryism through which I have passed, and consider the then almost universal tendency to worship the powers that were, and their worst mistakes,—I feel astonished that a nerve-shaken man, whose affrighted imagination in boyhood and youth slept with dead men's faces,—a man, whose first sensation on standing up to address a public meeting is that of his knees giving way under him,—should have been able to retain his political integrity, without abjuring one article of his fearless father's creed. But even in those days, I find I was a free-trader—though I knew it not. So barbarous were some of the deeds done in that time in the name of the law, and so painful was the impression which they made on me when I was about sixteen years old, that I should certainly have emigrated to the United States had I possessed sufficient funds for that purpose; nor should I, I fear, have been very scrupulous as to the means of obtaining them,—so fully had the idea of emigration obtained possession of me, so passionately had my mind embraced it, and so poetically had I associated with it Crusoe notions of self-dependence and isolation. It is not improper to blush for uncommitted offences. Even now, after forty-five years have been added to my previous existence, I shudder if I

chance to meet an experience-monger who tells me 'that the end justifies the means : '—a false doctrine and fatal faith, which have wrought the fall of many an all-shunned brother, and of ill-starred sisters numberless, once unstained as the angels. Oh, think of this, ye tempted and ye tempters, even if ye be magistrates ! but let no man believe that good effected by evil can be aught but evil done, and an apology for more !—I must return from these digressions."

His ninth year was an era in his life, he says ; for his father having cast a great pan, weighing several tons, for an uncle who lived in Thurlestone, the young embryo Poet resolved to travel thither, with it ; and accordingly, at sunset, he stole unperceived, and hid himself inside the pan amongst the hay. As the night advanced, he looked forth from his hiding place, and gazed long, with new, strange, and excited feelings, upon the great blue vault of heaven, with its solemn and lonely stars. " I have not forgotten," he writes, "how much I was excited by the solemnity of the night, and its shooting stars, until I arrived at Thurlestone, about four o'clock in the morning." His uncle, who was of course surprised to see him, made the best of his visit, and sent him to school at Pennistone, where he learnt nothing. His heart, too, was with his mother ; and he spent his evenings in looking from the back of his uncle's house to Hoyland Swaine ; for he had discovered that Masboro'

lay beyond that village; "and ever when the sun went down, I felt," he says, "as if some great wrong had been done me."

When he returned from this "land of the great Pan," as he calls it; he was sent to Hollis School in Sheffield; but made no proficiency in his studies. All his sums were done for him by the other boys, and his father regarded him as a confirmed dunce. He confesses that he could never learn any thing at school—that he got into the Rule of Three, without having any knowledge of numeration; and stuck in Decimals, like Christian in his bog of Despond. Still he was looked up to, by the other boys at school, and his brother Giles, when in danger, always took Elliott out to defend him. His father, as a last resource, finding that he had made nothing out at Hollis' Hospital, sent him to Dalton School, two miles from Masboro, where he hoped to have him more under his own eye. "I see," says Elliott, "at this moment, as vividly as if fifty years had not since passed over me, the kingfisher shooting along the Don, as I passed Schoolward through the Aldwark Meadows, eating my dinner four hours before dinner time." And so Nature was revenged upon the schoolmaster; for she taught the boy her great mystic alphabet and deep symbol writing, before he could either read a book, or write a line. She took her own way likewise in doing it; eschewing the methods of

the pedant. Elliott made no proficiency at this new school—although his master was a kind and good man—"a sort of sad-looking, half-starved, angel without wings," he says; "and I have stood for hours beside his desk, with the tears running down my face, utterly unable to set down one correct figure." His ignorance, and apparent want of common capacity, disgusted him with school duties, and during the summer months, he was almost always absent—playing truant amongst the woods of Dalton, Deign, Silverwood, and Thryberg Park. On one of these occasions he stole duck eggs, mistaking them for the eggs of wild birds, and was brought before the Lady of the Manor for his delinquency, who dismissed him, when she saw what a live goose he was.

These truantings were soon discovered by the poet's father, who resolved at last to make him work in the foundry. "The result of this experiment," says Elliott, "vexed the experimenter; for it was soon found that I could play my part at the York Keelman, with the best of its customers." He was never fond of the ale-house, however, and his thoughts were always wandering to the canal banks, which were covered all over with the golden "*ladies'-bed-straw*," and to his little ships. In other respects the trial at the Foundry proved successful, for Elliott found he was not less clever than other beginners, and the work he had to do, was done.

He mentions that about this time, he had strong religious impressions, and attended the ministrations of an excentric Domine Sampson, with regularity and profit. But Nature at this juncture played him another trick, and dissipated his religious moods, with her fine nicknackery of flowers. Happening to call one Sunday at his aunt Robinson's—a widow with three children and £30 a-year, out of which she gave her two sons an education, which made them both gentlemen—he became acquainted with "Sowerby's English Botany." "Never shall I forget," he says, "the impression made upon me by the beautiful plates. I actually touched the figure of the primrose, half convinced that the mealiness on the leaves was real." The good aunt seeing the delight he took in these pictures, showed him how to draw the figures, by holding them to the light with a thin piece of paper before them. Finding he could draw them correctly, *he was lifted at once*, he says, *above the inmates of the ale-house*, at least a foot in mental stature. And here we may see the reason why, in his æsthetic poems, he exhorts the working classes to cultivate a "*Home of Taste*." His aunt then showed him a book of *Dry Plants*, which, with the Botanical work, belonged to her son Benjamin. And these cheap and simple exhibitions gave an impulse to Elliott's mind which never abandoned him, until it had completed its work,

and conducted him to the Elysian fields of poetry. He soon after began to study Botany on his own account—not, however, in a consecutive and scientific manner—for to the day of his death he never relished Botany as a Science; the classifications of which seemed to him to be, like preparations for sending flowers to prison. The minister, who had begun to entertain hopes of Elliott's conversion, made frequent inquiries at the paternal home, why Ebenezer did not come to chapel as usual; and the Poet says that he passed his Sundays in gathering flowers, that he might make pictures of them; totally unconscious that he was learning the art of poetry in his woodland wanderings. Nay, he then hated poetry; especially that of Pope, which always gave him the headache. His floral and herbal gatherings soon made him a noted person in his neighbourhood, and people stopped him with his plants to enquire what diseases he was going to cure. Even his wonderful brother Giles, condescended to admire his *Hortus Siccus*; and he had been so long a stranger to the voice of praise, that it sounded sweetly in his ears, and he welcomed it when it came with joy and triumph. About this time, his brother read to him the first book of Thompson's Seasons, and when he came to the description of the Polyanthus and Auricula—"I waited," says Elliott, "impatiently until he laid down the book; I then took it into the garden, where I compared

the description with the living flowers. Here was a new idea! Botany in verse!—a prophecy,” he continues, “that the days of scribbling were at hand.” The account which he gives of his first essay in verse is interesting enough. It was an imitation in rhyme of Thompson’s blank verse thunder-storm. “I knew perfectly well,” he writes, “that sheep could not take flight after being killed—but the rhyme seemed to be of opinion that they should be so described; and as it doggedly abided by this perversity, there was nothing for it but to describe my flock, scudding away, after the lightning had slain them.” His cousin Benjamin criticised the poem mercilessly, and Elliott never forgave him. This cousin it seems was a scholar; and the Poet was never so happy as when listening to his recitations of Homer’s Greek—of which, although he did not understand a word—yet after the lapse of nearly half a century, its music had not departed from his soul. He regarded his brother Giles as a prodigy, and became at last painfully alive to his own deficiencies. Giles’ accomplishments stung him into self-instruction; and the misery of his mind at this crisis, may be gathered from the fact that he lost his round, healthy proportions; and fell into the disease of all students—viz: that of leanness, and pale-faced anxiety. He bought a grammar, and studied it laboriously—but could never retain a single rule in his memory. Then

he took to the key, and read it through and through, a hundred times. "I found at last," he says, "that by reflection, and by supplying elisions, &c., I could detect and correct grammatical errors. At this moment, I do not know a single rule in grammar, although I flatter myself I can write English as well as Samuel Johnson could; and detect errors in a greater author—Samuel Bailey." His attempt at learning the French language, was equally unsuccessful—and his teacher, who seems to have been an incompetent person, got in this instance, all the blame.

An accident assisted him much at this period by placing a number of books at his disposal; and as Elliott confesses that his writings owe something to the list which he furnishes in the text of his Autobiography, section 5th, I shall be pardoned for naming them. They are "Barrow's Sermons," "Ray's Wisdom of God," "Derham's Physico Theology," "Young's Night Thoughts," "Hervey's Meditations," "Herepin's Travels;" and three vols. of the "Royal Magazine," embellished with engravings. "I was never weary," he says, "of Barrow, and Young taught me to condense." Shenstone was afterwards a favourite with him; and he thinks that he is now undervalued. The following passage contains a good word to all students. "I never could read a feeble book through; and it follows that I read master-pieces only—

the best thoughts of the highest minds : after Milton, Shakspeare ; then Ossian ; then Junius with my father's Jacobinism for a commentary. Paine's Common Sense ; Swift's Tale of a Tub ; Joan of Arc ; Schiller's Robbers ; Burger's Leonora ; Gibbon's Decline and Fall ; and long afterwards Tasso, Dante, De Stael ; Schlegel, Hazlitt, and the Westminster Review." A strange medley ; but valuable as revealing something of the sources of Elliott's peculiarities of writing and thinking.

He complains that his memory sometimes fails him altogether ; and yet he almost knew the Bible by heart, at twelve years of age ; and could repeat, at sixteen, *without missing a word*, the 1st, 2nd, and 6th books of Paradise Lost.

He is conscious to a considerable extent of his own powers, although he does not do full justice to his good angel, and speaks disparagingly of his acknowledged merits and genius. "Time," he says, "has developed in me, *not genius*, but powers which exist in all men, and lie dormant in most. I cannot, like Byron and Montgomery, pour poetry from my heart, as from an unfailing fountain ; and of my inability to identify myself like Shakspeare and Scott with the character of other men, my abortive 'Kerhoneh' and 'Taurepdes,' and similar rejected failures, are melancholy instances. My thoughts are all exterior ; my mind is the mind of my eyes. A primrose is to me a prim-

rose, and nothing more. I love it because it is nothing more. There is not in my writings, one good idea that has not been suggested to me by some real occurrence, or by some object actually before my eyes, or by some remembered object or occurrence, or by the thoughts of other men heard or read." At the close of his Autobiography he says:—"Newspaper-taught as I am, and having no ideas of my own, I can only seize those of others as they occur; earnestly applying them to current occasions. If I have been mistaken in my objects, I am sorry for it; but I have never advocated any cause, without first trying to know the principle on which it was based. On looking back on my public conduct, thanks to the science which poor Cobbett, ever floundering, but great and brave, called in scorn 'Poleetical Economy,' I find I have had little to unlearn. And when I shall go to my account, and the Great Questioner, whose judgments err not, shall say to me 'What didst thou with the lent talent?' I can truly answer, 'Lord, it is here; and with it, all that I could add to it, doing my best to make *little, much.*'"

Such, in a condensed form, is the account which Elliott gives of his early years. I am warned, however, by his son Francis, not to place implicit reliance upon the statements it contains. "I doubt not," he says, "that it is as correct as my father could make it; but he

was the unfittest man in the world to write or speak of himself. His estimate of his merits was far below the true one; and he was neither the dunce and simpleton at school, nor the lesser light, paled by the brilliant brother Giles, which he described, and believed himself. Giles was a first-rate business man; but he was nothing more; and my father was that, and something more. I am not surprised, however, that his more solid and sterling qualities, were but a poor foil to the mortal thrusts, which in the eyes of his father's household, Giles' brilliance dealt him. All of them homaged and flattered Giles, and my father hid his despised head in the brightness of his brother's glory. I have always thought that the disparagement which he received from all about him, had much influence in producing that melancholy and love of gloom, which, through the rest of his life, so strongly characterized his mind. At school he fared no better than at home; and unless he was consoled by his almost constant truantings in the woods and fields, his youth must have been one of unrelieved repining and despondency. I am inclined to think, however, that the ambitious lad was happier in so making himself a poet, than he would have been in outshining his school-fellows, in studies distasteful to him."

This statement is further confirmed by Mr. John Fowler, and Mr. Paul Rodgers of Sheffield,

who were both friends of the poet. The latter says : “ Mr. Elliott, in the account of himself, recently published in the *Athenæum*, talks about his own remarkable dullness, when a boy. I do not think he is right ; in fact, he was no judge at all in the matter. It was rather that his brother’s taste and his differed, than that Ebenezer was essentially inferior in any way. I have no doubt he shewed as much genius among the modellers and mechanists in the manufactory, as the other did in the shop or the counting-house. Mr. Mark Gregory, then a youth about his own age, and long a workman of Elliott’s father’s—a man whom Ebenezer always highly esteemed—says he never knew that his young master was dull at any thing, but always regarded him, as very much the contrary.”

Mr. Rodgers likewise gives the following description of the “wonderous brother Giles,” who later on in life fell, I regret to add, into intemperate habits, and blighted his own prospects, and the hopes which his family had entertained of him :—“ He was rather a handsome-faced youth ; but lame, went with a limp, and wore a high-heeled shoe. He had very quick parts ; and was Ebenezer’s acknowledged favourite.”

From his sixteenth to his twenty-third year Elliott worked for his father—as laboriously as any servant he had—and without wages, except a shilling or two for pocket-money.

His first trial at business, which proved so melancholy in its results, is thus spoken of by his son, from whose letter, I have previously quoted: "The fortune he received with my mother, was invested in a business already bankrupt beyond redemption; and my father went in as a partner with the old firm, consisting of *many* partners, amongst whom was my grandfather. Here he passed several years, in hopeless efforts, and hopeless hopes and yearnings, to retrieve the desperate affair. He lost the last penny he had, in it; and found an asylum under the roof of my mother's maiden sisters, with whom he spent many months, in a state of wretchedness, which was relieved, however, by the tenderest solicitude for his happiness, on the part of his friends. He endeavoured to beat down despair by writing poems, and painting landscapes in oil, from views in the neighbourhood. But his state of mind will be readily conceived when it is remembered that he was an honest man, a proud man, and possessed of all the sensitiveness which characterizes the poet."

In 1821, when he was forty years of age, he was enabled, chiefly by the affectionate generosity of his wife's sisters, to make another venture in business. He began with a capital of £150, and managed at last to accumulate a fortune; making £20 a day sometimes, without stirring from his counting-house, or ever seeing the

goods he disposed of, which exchanged hands as they were landed at the wharf. His warehouse is described as a small, dingy place, piled all round with bars of iron, having a bust of Shakspeare in the centre of it; and his counting-house contained casts of Achilles, Ajax, and Napoleon. The following anecdote, (the circumstances of which occurred in this warehouse) illustrative of his attachment to his poorer guests, and of his impatience at insolent behaviour, has been forwarded to me from Sheffield. "All readers of Elliott," the writer commences, "will be prepared to learn that a man of such strong passions did not always conduct himself with perfect smoothness, under circumstances of real provocation. No one ever saw *him* guilty of anything like a deliberate, or even thoughtless insult; but in reply to insolence he was always indignant. A friend of mine, in humble life, happening to call at his warehouse in Gibraltar Street, found himself in company there, with a third party,—a semi-clerical gentleman. Whether this gentleman had a previous pique against my friend, or whether something arose during the conversation which caused a misunderstanding between them, I cannot tell; but from some cause or other, the said gentleman deliberately insulted him. Whereupon, losing all control over himself, Elliott started up, and shouting 'Away with you! Do my friends come here to be insulted by you?' seized a broom-stick which

was within reach, and dealt his blows on the offender without mercy, not ceasing until he had pursued him into the middle of the street." This is certainly the most *striking* anecdote which I have been able to gather from the Poet's history ; and like that of the old woman who flung the stool at the head of the bishop—in the Scotch Kirk—in Charles the First's time, it sticks very fast to the memory.

Up to the time of Elliott's second trial of business, in 1821, he had written, says his son, "nothing of importance ; nothing which gave prophecy of Ebenezer Elliott. But shortly after this event, works of greater pretension to poetic power appeared ; and the world had an opportunity—and used it—of disregarding some of the finest poetry he ever penned, and which it now lauds as such, under other titles, in the poems of 'Love,' and 'Night.' Of the 'Giaour,' and 'Scotch Nationality,'* poems of about the same period, I am not able to speak so highly. The one contained first-rate satire, which is never even the worst poetry ; and the other an attempt at humour, which was of course a failure—for humour was a faculty which he did not possess."

Many of his poems were written at the request of his friends ; and the following deeply interesting letter explains the origin of "The Sinless

* Vide Appendix.

Cain"—which celebrates the life tragedy of genius.

"Upperthorpe, 15th Oct. 1835.

"Young Lady,

"Your father requested me to write you a poem, and I did so, and called it '*The Sinless Cain.*' But you are come into a world filled with dangers; and instead of sending you the poem, I think it better, on the whole, to refer you to it, when it shall appear in some one or other of the Magazines. You will remember that you are the occasion of its having been written. It describes a wretched being who has wandered over the earth, playing various parts, almost all of them sad ones, during more than six thousand years. If in after days you chance to meet with him, do not believe that the rags which may clothe him, are the garment of God's indignation. Should he ask you for a pittance, borrow a penny for him, if you have not one. Should he silently implore your pity only, turn not away; for he has a heart that will thank you for a tear, with its last throb. But should he solicit your love, tell him that you once heard of a maiden, who, dreaming that she saw and heard a celestial spirit (that had eyes bright as passion, and a voice like that of the woods in spring), loved it with excessive love, but embracing it, found it a corpse!—sweet, indeed, and sadly beautiful, with tears in its

eyelids, like a white rose gathered in the dew—but still a corpse! Which, had it never known the touch of mortal passion, might have continued to walk even on the earth, a spirit of light and joy. There is a meaning in all this, which, if you cannot understand, come and learn it, from

“EBENEZER ELLIOTT.”

“To Miss Rodgers.”

I have already related how the Poet became acquainted with Southey, and was cheered on by him; and how, likewise, he was suddenly raised into fame by the publication of the Corn Law Rhymes. It will be interesting to get a personal glimpse of him at this period of his life; and I will, therefore, quote from Mr. Stanton, an American writer, who visited him about this time, and presents us with the following picture, both of the Poet and his home. “I inquired,” says he, “of a young man, dressed in a frock besmeared with iron and coal, for the head of the establishment. ‘My father,’ said he, ‘is just gone: you’ll find him at his house yonder.’ I repaired thither. The Corn Law Rhymer stood on the threshold, in his stocking feet, holding a pair of coarse shoes in his hand. His frank ‘Walk in’ assured me I was welcome. I had just left the residence of Montgomery. The transition could hardly have been greater—from James Montgomery to Ebenezer Elliott.

The former was polished in his manners, exquisitely neat in his personal appearance, and his bland conversation never rose above a calm level, except once, when he spoke with an indignation which years had not abated, of his repeated imprisonment in York Castle, for the publication—first in verse and then in prose—of liberal and humane sentiments, which offended the government. And now I was confronted with a burly ironmonger, rapid in speech, glowing with enthusiasm, putting and answering a dozen questions in a breath; eulogising American republicanism, and denouncing British aristocracy; throwing sarcasms at the Duke of Wellington, and anointing General Jackson with the oil of flattery; pouring out a flood of racy talk about church establishments, poetry, politics, the price of iron, and the price of corn; while ever and anon he thrust his damp feet in the embers, and hung his shoes on the grate to dry." As his prosperity increased, he built a handsome house in the suburbs of Sheffield, where he could look down upon the smoky chimnies of the town, full of prophetic thoughts—like Teufelsdröck in the "Sartor Resartus." A path at the back of the house led to the hills, and the vale of the Rivelin, about which he loved to sing. Here he entertained all comers right hospitably, attracting around him troops of friends, who listened to his songs and speech as to an oracle.

During the whole of his residence in Sheffield,

and indeed throughout life, he identified himself with its interests, took part in all the public concerns of the town, was an active member of the Committee of the Mechanics' Institution, and delivered the course of lectures there, "On Poets and Poetry," some of which were published in Tait's Magazine, and are admirable literary performances. He once read to me the lecture "On Burns," which is a prose poem, full of beauty and wise discrimination; and I hope to see this and the entire course included in his writings.

Mr. Robert Leader, junr., in an article which appeared in the Sheffield and Rotherham Independent, December 8th, 1849, gives the following summary of Elliott's political career:—

"In politics, the great object of Mr. Elliott was the abolition of the food monopoly. Some were ready to say that he was a monomaniac on this subject. But he saw that this question lay at the root of all others in regard to politics and national prosperity; that a nation confined to a limited supply of food could never be permanently happy and prosperous; and that a commercial system based on restriction could not be sound. The great cause of Mr. Elliott's rejoicing in the triumph of Reform was the conviction that it must speedily ensure the repeal of the Corn Laws. He soon after formed a local society for promoting this object. But the restoration of transitory prosperity diverted

the public mind from the subject, and the Anti-Corn Law agitation failed. Mr. Elliott continued to raise his warning voice, but it was not until 1838 that people could be induced again to move. Then commenced the agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League, and also that for the Charter. Mr. Elliott had been so much disheartened by the previous apathy shewn towards his great subject, that he seemed to lack faith in the sincerity and power of the movement in Manchester. The cotton lords had so long been apathetic that he could not all at once give them credit for having honestly and heartily taken up the cause. He seems to have had more hope in the movement for the Charter, which commenced about the same time, and in which at first some influential Birmingham Reformers took part. In September, 1838, Mr. Elliott attended a conference in London, and in the same month he presided at a meeting in Roscoe Fields, when the Charter was first publicly brought forward in Sheffield. But when, in the succeeding January, the Chartists put themselves in opposition at an Anti-Corn Law meeting, Mr. Elliott was found supporting the effort which they opposed. He did not completely separate himself from them, however, till further proof had been given of the desperate nature of the counsels which prevailed among them. When Peter Foden was arrested for sedition, in August, 1839, Mr. Elliott, who seems not to have

watched Foden's course, gave bail for him, at the same time reprobating the men who counselled violence. His want of caution was punished, as might fairly have been expected, by the absconding of Foden, and Mr. Elliott's recognizance was estreated. The more complete demonstration of the principles then dominant among the Chartists, which the events of the winter of 1839-40 afforded, seems to have satisfied Mr. Elliott completely that the Chartist cause was in wrong hands. He continued to aid by his writings the Anti-Corn Law movement, but he felt that with him the time for active personal effort was passed. He retired from business, and from active interference in politics, and left Sheffield in 1841, to spend his last years at Great Houghton, near Barnsley, where he built a house upon a small estate of his own. Many persons have wondered that he took so little part in the operations of the Anti-Corn Law League. We believe the primary cause to have been a conviction that his work was done, and this was not unmingled with a doubt whether it was yet possible to save the country from the anarchy into which he foresaw that the continuance of monopoly must inevitably plunge it. Becoming interested, too, in rural engagements, being separated from the friends with whom he had been used to converse on public affairs, and left behindhand, as it were, in the current news of the day, he lacked the

stimulus to play his accustomed part. During great part of his residence at Great Houghton, he wrote and published little. To various invitations to take part in public affairs, he pleaded the old man's excuse, and gradually withdrew himself."

The following letter upon the Corn Laws addressed to Mr. Rodgers, of Sheffield, and dated Houghton Common, May 7th, 1842, is almost a prophesy; and shows the political sagacity and foresight of the Poet:—

"Eat each other, said we? Yes! but bare bones are poor picking. I have still the remains of a forlorn hope in the Tories. Peel, I have long thought, understands our position, and will do his best to prevent the coming catastrophe; but he wants moral courage. Wellington does not understand our position; when he does, if ever, he will act boldly on his convictions—perhaps too late.

"But the 'fifty pound tenant-at-will-clause Whigs;—the ballot-refusing Whigs;—the reform-defecting Whigs;—the monopoly-defending Whigs;—the Bank Charter-renewing Whigs;—the Coercion-bill Whigs;—the twenty million-slave-holder-rewarding Whigs;—the half-faced, double-faced Whigs, who could once have saved the State, and would not—can do no good, if willing. Their time is past.

"EBENEZER ELLIOTT."

The active part which he took at political meetings in Sheffield and elsewhere, and the fierce poems and epigrams which he scattered over the land, made him many enemies; and to such an extent did the virulence of party feeling prevail against him, that when in 1839 he sought admission to the "Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society"—the gentlemen members blackballed him! Elliott, who was fearful lest this transaction, so disgraceful to the parties concerned in it, should damage in its results the Mechanics' Institution, of which he was a member, wrote the following letter to Messrs. Paul Rodgers and John Fowler, members of the Committee, offering to withdraw himself from all active part in its counsels and proceedings. He was the more readily induced to this course, because certain weak-minded persons had already taken offence at his remarks upon a late occasion, whilst introducing the Reverend B. Stannus, to the audience, preparatory to the delivery, by that gentleman, of a Lecture "On Burns." The letter runs thus:—

"Sheffield, 11th March, 1839.

"To Messrs. Paul Rodgers and John Fowler.

"In my old age, I have got the heart-ache. The few words with which I introduced Mr. Stannus, I am told offended influential friends, or foes, of the Institution. Certainly, when I said

he would show that "tow hacklers have souls," I forgot that not one in fifty of my hearers knew that poor Burns had been a tow hackler. You at least will not suspect me of trying to injure the Institution. Besides, you know, if tow hacklers have souls, cutters and grinders have ! This may be a scandal ; but the conclusion seems inevitable. You are aware how unwilling I am to come forward on any public occasion, and that I never do so, but from a wish to be useful. All the misfortunes of the Institution, it is said, are owing to two or three infidels, of whom I am the worst. It tortures me to hear it said that no institution can stand, if I am known to support it. They err, however, who think that I am an irreligious man. I know more of the book than some persons who live by it. Having studied the evidence on both sides of the question, I am a Christian from conviction ; and because I cannot help it. But would it not be better, not to elect me to any office in the Institution ? I could then mingle with the audience, and should not offend by my seeming presumption. There would then be no drawback on my efforts to serve the Institution ; and no loss could be sustained as I am useless on committees, and worse than useless in the chair.

"Might I suggest to Mr. Fowler, that in moving a vote of thanks to Mr. Stannus, it would be well to say something to the following

purport. In Mr. Stannus's first lecture, he told us that we have to thank John Knox, for the schools and the educational systems of Scotland. How much then does the world owe to John Knox. He sowed the fire-seeds which, growing into a flame, enabled the English Puritans, not long afterwards, to kindle another flame, that seems destined to enlighten the whole earth. But for him, and the schools of Scotland, perhaps, there would not have been in the world, at this day, a shadow or a dream of public liberty. The mention of a fact so honorable to John Knox; connected as it is, with a similar fact in the history of Burns, who established the first Scotch book-club, shows what a mighty educational engine publiclecturing may become; and so long as one person can be found to give lectures, splendid as those which have been heard from the reverend gentleman, I for one, will not despair of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institution. It stands yet; and if the edifice of society is to stand, such institutions must not fall. If this country is to escape ruin, it will not be by monopolizing ignorance.

* * * * *

Now don't suppose that I should not have written this letter if the philosophers had not blackballed me. I should not care a straw for a hogshead full of their black balls, unless they were black peas, and I had permission to feed a pig with them."

Elliott was at this time the highest subscriber to the funds of the Institution; and he manifested his attachment to the cause of Popular Education, by his own labours therein, and by the counsel which he gave to others respecting it. Altogether, he was not only a good poet, but a good citizen, and a true Patriot. From the beginning to the end of his life, there was not a blot or flaw upon his character. His attention to his business was almost proverbial; and although many of his poems were written in his counting-house, he never allowed his genius to interfere with his bread. He was deeply loved by the higher class of artizans in Sheffield, who read and appreciated his poems; whilst the middle classes, as a whole, never understood him, and can scarcely be said, even now, to be acquainted with his works. The lower orders of the town knew him only as a politician, and public speaker; and it frequently happened, whilst upon the platform, or hustings, that he was carried away by the force of his own thoughts into a complete forgetfulness of the conventional uses of language. On more than one occasion he has shocked the propriety of his hearers, and of the town at large, by the utterance of forbidden words, whilst speaking upon the ultimate consequences of the Corn Laws, of which he was at the time totally unconscious. He was so absorbed in his subject that he forgot to dress it in decent costume; and from these

and similar causes sprang the prejudice which ordinary people conceived against him.

Nevertheless, he was a brave, high-minded, and noble person ; one of the few men who come to us across the centuries, and restore our faith in man and manful action. His whole life was a poem—an epic that closed with the demolition of the Corn Laws.

His prosperity at Sheffield was interrupted by the panic of 1837 ; and the subsequent commercial revulsion, caused by the operation of the Corn Laws,—against which he was still fighting—swept away a great part of his earnings. “ I lost fully one-third of my savings,” he says ; “ and after enabling my six boys to quit the nest, got out of the fracas with about £6000, which I will try to keep.” He now left his villa near Sheffield, and retired to Hargate Hill, near Great Houghton, where he built a good substantial house, suitable to his family and resources. In an interesting letter, which he wrote to Mr. Tait of Edinburgh, after he was quietly domiciled in his new abode, he relates all the particulars of the purchase, and gives an account of the fortunes and prospects of his children, which I will here extract :

“ My eldest son, Ebenezer, whom you saw at Sheffield, is a clergyman of the establishment, being at Lothedale, near Skipton, on a salary of about £140 per annum, and a house, better far than mine, rent free. He has married a lady of

great merit, who has a fortune of a hundred a year, made safe to herself, and which is in Chancery. Perhaps a more simple-mannered, unassuming man never lived. He is no poet, and yet there is a touch of the poetic in all he does or suffers. If he opens his snuff-box to a stranger, he spills the snuff of course ; and he gets on best when he stumbles. His mother thinks he has some resemblance to me.

“ My son Benjamin, unwarned by his father’s losses, is carrying on a steel trade at Sheffield in my old premises, where (as he thinks, poor fellow ! for he is a greater hopper) he has some prospect ; in any other country he would already have made an independency. He endures privations such as no man of his pretensions ought to endure anywhere, and such as no man will here endure if free trade be obtained before all is lost. He is a fine young man, upwards of six feet high, of superior abilities, and the highest moral worth—but, alas ! not unindebted to his grandmother !

“ My sons Henry and Francis (as I wish them to do) are living as bachelors on the interest of money earned and saved by themselves, and increased by gifts from me. Henry is tall, handsome, and mechanical ; he ought to have been apprenticed to engineering. Francis is tall and good-looking, but he has the misfortune to be a born poet ; for my mother has transmitted to him, through me, her nervous constitution and

body-consuming sensibilities. Is poetic genius, then, a disease? My seventh son, Edwin, is a clergyman of the established church, for which he may be almost said to have educated himself, and into which he has won his way by his own efforts. Less assisted by me than any of my other sons, he is now a rector in the West Indies, where he has, I am told, a better income than I have been able to secure after all my toils. He is a Lytton-Bulwer-looking person, not unlike a well-grown young clergy-justice, with forehead enough for three. At school he was remarkable for laughing hostility into kindness—a favourite wherever he went. We always called him the gentleman of the family. Having observed, when quite a youth, that fine folks ride, he broke open his thrift-box, and with the contents (after drawing tears and kisses from his mother) bought an ass of a Tory's son (all his associates were Tories), who sold it because it was starving. Edwin knew that he had nothing for it to eat; but the ass, accustomed to hope in despair, had expectations. It commenced business at my place in Burgus Street, by thrusting its lean neck through the kitchen window and eating a pound of butter. The servant lass, suspecting it to be a thief, kicked it into the street. From the street it got into the fields, and thence into the pin-fold. To prevent the lad's heart from breaking, I paid 7s. 6d. for trespass, and released the famished creature.

What then was to be done? Mark the difference between the Tories and the toried! At last, after vast efforts in stock-feeding, I made a present of it to a small manufacturing free-holder who always voted blue. He fattened it by night in his neighbour's field, and then sold it to him for two guineas.

“My poor son John, the weakling—kind-hearted, intelligent, five feet four inches high, and almost blind—is druggisting at Sheffield, in a sort of chimney called a shop, for which he pays £40 a year. He is engaged, almost without a moment's pause, from seven in the morning until ten at night, in dealing out halfpenny-worths of drugs; yet I, who have been accustomed to sell goods by tons, think that he is as likely to thrive as most of his neighbours, and believe that there are thousands of persons in Sheffield who would gladly change places with him. But what can our constitution be worth, if it should turn out at last that my sons Henry and Francis, living poorly on the interest of their earnings, are wiser in their generation than the trade-troubled? The worst I wish the Dukes of Richmond and Buckingham is, that they may be forced, in my time, to earn their living as my sons Benjamin and John earn theirs. Old as I am, I would engage to hop a mile without changing leg, or die rather than not, to see them at it; for to their unholy legislation, I impute it, that of my six sons, the only two who could

afford to marry may be said to be maintained by the labour of others.

“Of my thirteen children, five are gone—William, Thomas, Charles, and the two unchristened ones. They left behind them no memorial, and the old inscription has departed from the grave of Charles. But they are safe in the bosom of Mercy, and not yet quite forgotten even here.”

We have now before us the leading features in the external life of the Poet. As a boy he was dull, idle, and incapable of learning the simplest rudiments of education. Up to his thirteenth year he does not manifest a single faculty from which his future greatness might be augured. His affection for his mother is the only redeeming quality which he seems to have possessed. For although, he says, he cannot remember when he was not fond of ruralities, one can scarcely call his endless truantings a manifestation of his love for Nature. It was vagabondism, induced by shame, not unmixed with sorrow, at his own wilful ignorance. Still the forms of Nature impressed themselves upon his soul in these wild, woodland ramblings, and remained there in dumb pictury, until he was able to reproduce them in song. I notice likewise, that he never forgets a single vision of Nature; and that all her phenomena and beautiful creatures, range themselves round his mind as if he was the sole centre of the universe.

The kingfisher flying over the waters of the Don, is remembered through the darkness of fifty years; and the lonely and solemn night, with its flaming stars and meteors, is the unforgotten canopy of his Hejira into the land of the great Pan. The nightingales in Bassingthorpe Wood; the snake which waited for him on the sunny Sabbath mornings at the top of Primrose Lane, are all related to him, and flow towards him by the law of polarity. They are waiting to be sung; although he is unconscious of that deep underlying faculty which they are gradually and silently awakening within him. The botanical book and the specimens of dry plants, which he saw at his aunt's, gave the first quickening impulse to his mind and genius. Up to this time he had been a frequent visitor at the York Keelman; was drunk even, a few days before this memorable visit to his aunt's cottage; but now, when he found he had talents, could admire—and, by mechanical process, draw the flowers—in the botanical book; he was lifted three feet all at once above his alehouse companions; and for the first time in his life the good demon opened the windows of his soul, and gave him a glimpse of the wonders and beauties of the universe. Then followed the impressions made upon him on hearing his brother Giles read that first book of Thomson's Seasons—his comparison of the poetical description of the flowers with the flowers themselves; and the new idea which burst upon

him of "*Botany in Verse!*" Afterwards, we find him rambling for a purpose; mysteriously collecting plants—for the cure of diseases, the people thought—and thought truly; although the diseases were not such as they imagined. Then Homer's Greek turns all his thoughts into melody; and at last he attempts his rhymed thunderstorm, where the sheep are represented running away after they were killed by lightning, *because the rhyme would have it so*; and thus, by slow and imperceptible degrees, was the mind of the Poet developed; and thus he sought to break the chains of his spirit, and uplift the awful veil of Nature. He served, however, a long apprenticeship to his art before he produced any thing worthy of a place in the Pantheon of literature. Twenty years elapsed between the publication of the Vernal Walk, and that of the Corn Law Rhymes; and although these are by no means his best performances, yet they won for him a name, which led to an appreciation by the public of those higher books which he had written in the interim alluded to. From the first his muse was wedded to politics and to social wrong. These, indeed, were the materials from which his inspiration was drawn; and he found in them the region of his work and power. Hence he never loses sight of his mission—but with the jealous eye, and vehement soul of a Prophet and Reformer, labours with-

out ceasing for its accomplishment. He is of all other men, the Man of his Age. Such scars are upon the face of this old warrior—such lightnings in his eyes—such thunder and terror upon his brow—yet withal such pity and womanly tenderness—such musical pathos in his heart—and all so strangely and inextricably woven in his nature and radiating his person, that were I to meet him a thousand years hence, in the most out-of-the-way corner of Heaven, I should recognize him in spite of his celestial raiment, and rejoice with him that life was at last swallowed up in victory.

I must not omit, before proceeding to the final division of my subject, to quote in this place, a short and characteristic note, written to the Editor of the "Sheffield Independent," by James Montgomery, the sole remaining poet now, in the town of fire and steel, upon the subject of this paper:—

"I do not remember having ever been for an hour in Mr. Elliott's company. Our occasional meetings were few, and short, and far between, though he was known and admired by me as a Poet, before the world would either know or honour him as such. He published several small volumes, at intervals, the manuscripts of which (mostly) he had confidentially submitted to me; and they had my best encouragement, on the ground of their merit; but not one of these could command

public attention, till he broke out in 'The Corn Law Rhymes,' as Waller said of Denham, 'like the Irish Rebellion, *forty thousand strong, when nobody thought of such a thing.*' Then, indeed, he compelled both astonishment and commendation from all manner of critics: Whig, Tory, and Radical reviewers vying with each other who should magnanimously extol the talents which they had either not discovered, or had superciliously overlooked, till, for their own credit, they could no longer hold their peace, or affect to despise what they had not had heart to acknowledge, when their countenance would have done service to the struggling author. A few of his master-pieces did find their way into the *Iris*, but I believe these were all republished by himself in his successive miscarrying volumes. I, however, am quite willing to hazard any critical credit by avowing my persuasion, that in originalty, power, and even beauty, when he chose to be beautiful,—he might have measured heads beside Byron in tremendous energy, Crabbe in graphic description, and Coleridge in effusions of domestic tenderness; while in intense sympathy with the poor, in whatever he deemed their wrongs or their sufferings, he excelled them all,—and perhaps everybody else among contemporaries, in prose or verse. He was, in a transcendental sense, *the Poet of the Poor*, whom, if not always '*wisely*,' I at least dare not say, he loved '*too well*.' His personal character, his

fortunes, and his genius, would require, and they deserve, a full investigation, as furnishing an extraordinary study of human nature."

The allusions made by Montgomery, in the above letter, to Elliott's "Effusions of Domestic Tenderness," and to his "intense" sympathy with the people, cannot be better illustrated than by the following poems.

THE DYING BOY TO THE SLOE BLOSSOM.

"BEFORE thy leaves thou com'st once more,
White blossom of the sloe !
Thy leaves will come as heretofore ;
But this poor heart, it's troubles o'er,
Will then lie low.

A month at least before thy time
Thou com'st, pale flower, to me ;
For well thou know'st the frosty rime
Will blast me, ere my vernal prime,
No more to be.

Why here in winter ? No storm lowers
O'er Nature's silent shroud !
But blithe larks meet the sunny showers,
High o'er the doomed untimely flowers
In beauty bowed.

Sweet violets, in the budding grove,
Peep where the glad waves run ;
The wren below, the thrush above,
Of bright to-morrow's joys and love
Sing to the sun.

And where the rose-leaf, ever bold,
Hears bees chant hymns to God,
The breeze-bowed palm, mossed o'er with gold,
Smiles on the well, in summer cold,
And daisied sod,

But thou, pale blossom, thou art come,
 And flowers in winter blow,
 To tell me that the worm makes room
 For me, her brother, in the tomb,
 And thinks me slow.

For as the rainbow of the dawn
 Foretells an eve of tears,
 A sunbeam on the saddened lawn,
 I smile, and weep to be withdrawn
 In early years.

Thy leaves will come; but songful spring
 Will see no leaf of mine;
 Her bells will ring, her bride's-maids sing,
 When my young leaves are withering
 Where no suns shine.

O might I breathe morn's dewy breath,
 When June's sweet Sabbaths chime!
 But, thine before my time, O death!
 I go where no flower blossometh,
 Before my time.

Even as the blushes of the morn
 Vanish, and long ere noon,
 The dew drop dieth on the thorn,
 So fair I bloomed; and was I born
 To die as soon?

To love my mother and to die—
 To perish in my bloom;
 Is this my sad brief history?
 A tear dropped from a mother's eye
 Into the tomb.

He lived and loved—will sorrow say—
 By early sorrow tried;
 He smiled, he sighed, he past away;
 His life was but an April day—
 He loved and died!

My mother smiles, then turns away,
But turns away to weep :
They whisper round me,—what they say
I need not hear, for in the clay
I soon must sleep.

Oh, love is sorrow ! sad it is
To be both tried and true ;
I ever trembled in my bliss ;
Now there are farewells in a kiss—
They sigh adieu.

But woodbines flaunt when blue-bells fade,
Where Don reflects the skies ;
And many a youth in Shire-cliff's shade
Will ramble where my boyhood played,
Though Alfred dies.

Then panting woods the breeze will feel,
And bowers, as heretofore,
Beneath their load of roses reel ;
But I through woodbined lanes shall steal
No more, no more.

Well, lay me by my brother's side,
Where late we stood and wept ;
For I was stricken when he died—
I felt the arrow as he sighed
His last, and slept."

The above poem needs no comment ; and the following, entitled "The People's Anthem," will show what Montgomery means by Elliott's love for the people.

"When wilt thou save the people ?
Oh, God of Mercy ! when ?
Not kings and lords, but nations !
Not thrones and crowns, but men !

Flowers of thy heart, oh, God, are they,
Let them not pass like weeds away !
Their heritage a sunless day !
God save the people !

Shall crime bring crime for ever,—
Strength aiding still the strong ?
Is it thy will, oh Father,
That man shall toil for wrong ?
' No ! ' say thy mountains ; ' No ! ' thy skies ;
' Man's clouded sun shall brightly rise
And songs be heard instead of sighs,'
God save the people !

When wilt thou save the people ?
Oh, God of Mercy ! when ?
The people, Lord ! the people !
Not thrones and crowns, but men !
God save the people ! thine they are,
Thy children, as thy angels fair :
Save them from bondage, and despair !
God ! save the people.

PART III.

Reminiscences of the Poet in his retirement at Hargate Hill.

It only now remains for me to speak of the Poet in his retirement at Hargate Hill, and present a picture of his private life. And as I design to give personal reminiscences of him, I hope I shall not incur the charge of egotism, if, in the execution of my purpose, I shall find it necessary to take a more prominent part than I could otherwise wish or consent to. At all events egotism is very far from my intention. I have thought the matter well over, however, and do not see how I could better render justice to my subject, than by adopting the plan I have chosen; and with this explanation will address myself forthwith to the work before me.

Hargate Hill is about eight miles from Barnsley, and three from Darfield Station, on the North Midland Railway. "I chose this place," says the Poet, "for its beauty, which, as is usual in affairs of the heart, is invisible to all but the enamoured. Rising early one morn-

ing, I took a beautiful walk of eighteen miles, through parks, wild lanes, and footpaths; reached the place; liked it; and returning the same day, resolved to buy it. Supposing the cottage, which stood upon it, to be worth £60, I gave £180 for the land, say £18 per acre. It was a wild land, having been a wood, and fox cover; called on the maps Argilt Hill, or wood. I have laid out upon it, land and all, about a thousand guineas. My establishment," he continues, "is illustrious for a St. Bernard dog, and a Welsh pony, 'the observed of all observers,' which in its green old age of twenty years, draws a small gig; both untaxed. Gig, harness, and mare, cost altogether £8 10s. My family here consists of Mrs. Elliott, my two daughters, or rather one daughter, for they keep house for one of my sons in Sheffield in turn,—a servant maid, and a man who works for me occasionally. Rid the Corn Laws, and I shall not be without dim visions of a flunkey."

It is a lovely walk from Darfield Station up to the Poet's house, and the surrounding country is of an undulating, quiet, and pastoral character. The road runs through thick hedges, and tall trees; with wide, green pastures on either side of it, where sheep and oxen graze in undisturbed tranquillity. I have many beautiful recollections of this old green road, with its musical birds and flowers; its cool brooks, and shadowy outline of trees, falling in sunny mo-

saics upon the pathway. I remember too, the wild roses and honeysuckles which grew upon the hedges; especially the latter, whose "clustered trumpets," as Elliott calls them, seemed to be blowing anthems of incense upon the morning air, to the praise of the Great Creator. For it always happened in my summer visits to Elliott that the days were fine and sunny; so that I look back upon them as Sabbaths consecrated to the genius of friendship and poetry.

After walking about two miles through this fine country, you come to Great Houghton, a long and straggling village, chiefly remarkable for an old, delapidated hall, from which Wentworth, Lord Strafford, married his third wife, and where he lived for some time afterwards. It is a fine, old ruin; and I remember with what interest I regarded it, on my first visit in that direction, to the Poet. It was very early one summer's morning, and long before I arrived at the village, I saw the grey, massy building looming through the sunny mists; and presently beheld its grotesque gables, and projecting windows. There was such an antique look about the place, that I could have imagined myself, for the moment, drawn suddenly back into the Middle ages. A nearer approach, however, dissipated the illusion; for it was soon evident that the old glory had departed from its walls, and with it the ancient spirit of its chivalrous owners. At the end of the field enclosing it

on the west, which it was evident enough, from the scattered elms and chesnut trees, had once been a park, hung a wooden gate upon two stone pillars—formerly a chief entrance to the mansion. A stone wall ran from this gate to the mansion itself; and upon an inspection of the front, I found it was converted into an inn, where provender was furnished to man and beast for money. I opened the great door and entered the house; for Elliott had frequently desired me to inspect the old mansion, and named it with pride, as the most interesting, historic ruin, in his neighbourhood. A large fire was blazing up the huge chimney, and the landlady was washing her chubby-faced children in an earthen pancheon, before it. A servant girl brought me a cup of milk, and asked if I would not like a drop of rum in it. The landlord, who was dressed in a velveteen shooting jacket, and corduroy breeches, was quietly devouring his hot toast and tea; whilst a braw fellow, who had brought a team of horses from Sheffield, was regaling himself on the oak settle, with a pint of beer. I enquired how the house came to be in such a delapidated condition, and the landlord told me that the steward of the property had frequently promised to patch up the old rooms, and make them habitable for him and his family—but always forgot to keep his word. The roof was quite rotten, he said, from neglect; and he could not afford to repair it

himself, out of the profits of the little farm he rented. And to this complexion, thought I, has the pride of Wentworth come at last! The lofty rooms, and tracery on the oaken beams and wainscots, seemed to mock the vulgarity and poverty of their present occupiers; and I could not help thinking that so fine a building—with its rich historic memories—might have been devoted to a better purpose than that of an ale-house. Having obtained permission, I wandered over the hall, up massy stone stair-cases; into large rooms lighted by magnificent windows; along twilight galleries, where old family pictures, instinct with life, were wont to stare from the walls upon observing visitors, in the dim times that are gone. Here were dark antechambers; the floors all rotten and breaking into dust beneath the foot; and there were others well lighted, and looking out upon a fair and beautiful country, over which the sun shone as brightly as in Strafford's proudest and happiest days. But Strafford himself, and his third wife, and all their retainers, where were they? The eastern part of the building is a mere ruin. The walls are dismantled; and have fallen in in some places; leaving nothing to be seen but broken staircases and mouldering stones; where the ivy clings, and the bat and the owl inhabit. Elliott, in speaking of this old hall to a friend, who reports his last visit to him in an interesting paper which appeared in a late number of

“Eliza Cook’s Journal,” says : “After Wentworth’s time it became the property of Sir William Rhodes, a stout Presbyterian and Parliamentarian. When the Civil War broke out, Rhodes took the field with his tenantry, on the side of the Parliament, and the first encounter between the two parties is said to have taken place only a few miles to the north of Old Houghton. While Rhodes was at Tadcaster, with Sir Thomas Fairfax, Captain Grey, (an ancestor of the present Earl Grey) at the head of a body of about three hundred Royalist Horse, attacked the old hall, and there being only some thirty servants left to defend it, took the place and set fire to it, destroying all that would burn. But Cromwell rode down the Cavaliers with his ploughmen at Marston Moor, not very far from here either, and then Rhodes built the little Chapel that you will see still standing at the west end of the hall, and established a Godly Presbyterian Divine to minister there ; forming a road from thence to Driffild, about three miles off, to enable the inhabitants of that place to reach it by a short and convenient route. I forget how it happened (continued the poet,) I believe it was by marriage,—but so it was—that the estate fell into the possession in these latter days, of Monckton Milnes, the poet’s father, to whom it belongs.”

Resting myself awhile, after I had explored the dusty chambers and ruins of the hall, I re-

sumed my walk through Great Houghton village, about half a mile from which, at the top of a hill, stands the poet's house. And as I ascended from the valley, I heard afar off the well-known bark of the great St. Bernard's dog already alluded to, as one of the notable appendages to Elliott's establishment. The red marly road led me under beautiful shady trees, up to Barnsdale Moor, which spread out with its blossoming gorse bushes, like a sea of golden emeralds. On the right hand, there was a farmhouse, with great stacks piled up on one side of it, and a little cluster of trees in the back ground; and on the left, fenced in from the Moor by a good and substantial stone-wall, stood Elliott's villa. Here I turned off upon the gravel road leading to the large blue gates, and entered the Poet's grounds, where I was saluted by the great shaggy dog, whose bark I had heard below. He came at me with a bound, wagging his huge tail; and jumping with his paws upon my shoulder, thrust his friendly snout into my face. I entered the garden, and soon stood within the porch of the door. It was about nine o'clock, and I remained awhile to listen; for I heard the sound of musical voices within, accompanied by the piano-forte. It was soon evident that the whole family were engaged in singing those beautiful matins: and I heard the Poet's voice mingling its plaintive wailings with the general harmony.

I walked into the hall, took off my hat and coat, and suddenly presented myself in the sitting room. There was a general exclamation of surprise, joy, and welcome. The Poet advanced first to shake me by the hand, flinging his spectacles over his shaggy brows, whilst his blue eyes were lighted up, as with the sunshine of all the worlds. It was something to feel the warm grip of that manly hand, and to hear the kind, hearty, and hospitable words that accompanied it. Nor was it less pleasant to be greeted by the good wife and fair daughter, who constituted at that time the little household at Hargate. I shall never forget that morning. The warm sunshine streamed into the room, from the open casement, as we sat at breakfast, and the sweet roses looked through the window panes, smiling upon the happy group within. An open canary cage stood upon a table, under the window, and the pretty yellow warbler sang its richest song all breakfast time, flying across the room at intervals, and settling with loving wings upon the head of the venerable Poet. Then we had a pleasant conversation upon the beautiful country that lay around us; with its dark woods, vallies, dells, and moorlands; and the Poet related to me all the local traditions and histories, which he had gathered from the "Deanery of Doncaster" and other sources. He spoke of two great oaks about a mile from his house, where the Wapontake assembled in

ancient times ; and where, in the hollow of one of them, Nevison, the celebrated highwayman, used to secret himself when in danger. He likewise related the history of Nevison, who was born at Wortley, in Charles the Second's time, —and knew the site of the public-house, where he was at last captured : “ A heart-breaking story, I have no doubt,” said Elliott, in speaking of it ; “ for the daughter of the innkeeper was Nevison's sweetheart.” The site of this house is at Kingstone Hill, otherwise celebrated as the place where Sir Godfrey Rhodes assembled the first troop in the parliamentary war. He spoke likewise of South Kirby—a little village about two-and-a-half miles off—as interesting to him from the fact that there the Rev. George Beaumont lived as Vicar—who was tried and executed, Feb. 18th, 1648, for holding correspondence with Colonel Morris, who had surprised Pontefract Castle for the King. Pope's mother was born also in his neighbourhood, he said ; viz., at Marrow Thorn ; although it was nearer Barnsley than Hargate. Her maiden name was Edith Turner ; and the registry of her birth is dated the 18th of June, 1649. These historical facts were deeply interesting to him, and he loved to relate them to his friends and visitors. I shall not soon forget the indignation with which he spoke of one Thomas Gargrave, who, at the age of thirty-four, was hanged, for burning

a poor servant boy of his in an oven, at Great Houghton.

When breakfast was over, the Poet related to me many incidents in his early life, and spoke of his ramblings around Sheffield, as the most beautiful of all his memories. The hill above the old Park Wood, where the scene of the Ranter's last sermon is placed, was a favourite haunt of his; and he heard the sound of the many voiced rivers—the Don, the Loxley, Ewden, Rivelin, Sheaf, and Porter—like the songs of innumerable Syrens, singing to him forever, and cheering him in his Hargate solitude. His love for these beautiful streams had grown into a passion, which was increased by his long absence from them; and whilst alluding to them on the morning in question, he repeated the following "Farewell to Rivelin"—which he had written previous to his leaving Sheffield:

"Beautiful River! Goldenly shining
Where, with the cistus, Woodbines are twining,
(Birklands around thee, Mountains above thee,)
Rivelin wildest! Do I not love thee?

Why do I love thee, Heart-breaking River?
Love thee, and leave thee? Leave thee for ever!
Never to see thee, Where the storms greet thee!
Never to hear thee, Rushing to meet me!

Never to hail thee, Joyfully chiming
Beauty in music, Sister of Wyming!
Playfully mingling Laughter and sadness,
Ribbledin's sister! Sad in thy gladness.

Oh, when thy poet, Weary reposes,
Coffin'd in slander, Far from thy roses,
Tell slave and tyrant (Heart-breaking River !)
Tell them I loved thee, Love thee for ever !”*

He was, however, well satisfied with his present position. “People,” he said, “laughed at me for buying this little estate, and thought I should soon die of *ennui*, so far removed as I am from friends, companions, and the conveniences of civilization. But they were all mistaken. I am happy with my family and books; and spend my time in laying out my garden, planting trees, walking, driving, reading, writing. I envy no man, nor have I any right to do so. This is not an unlovely neighbourhood, (he added) for a poet in his old age, as I will prove to you before I return. And in the meanwhile, look out of the window, and tell me what you think of the view from it.” I did so, and found that the Poet had made artificial openings in the trees which bounded the croft beyond the garden, through which the best pictures of the landscape were visible. Here were the Hall and Village of Great Houghton, and the dim landscape beyond it; and a little to the right, far off, through another opening of foliage, lay the manufacturing villages of Swinton and Warth; and nearer in the valley, the beautiful church of Darfield looked over the quiet scenery towards the Poet’s house, backed by the woods

* See Appendix.

of Wentworth ; through which the monuments of Hooper Stand, Needles' Eye, and Smoothing Iron, shot gleaming in the sunshine ; whilst a line of dark hills bounded the horizon. " Confess now," said the Poet, " that I have not made a foolish choice, in coming up here to live." Shortly afterwards, at my request, he read to me some of his unpublished poems. These were written in a large folio book, which he kept in a wooden box, on one side the piano. He repeated likewise, several melodies which he had adapted to some of our national airs, and I afterwards had the pleasure of joining his daughter in singing them. In this way we beguiled several hours ; and then took a short ramble over the moor, and through the fields and woods ; conversing by the way, of the aspects and tendencies of the age, and of the truly great men now living amongst us. In the political sphere, Cobden was his idol. He called him the Hero of the Bloodless Revolution ; the golden-mouthed orator, whose plainest words rang with music ; and whose eloquence, at once simple, powerful, earnest, argumentative, and convincing, was the most wonderful which ancient or modern times could boast of. " I look to Cobden," he said, " as the leader of the Advance Body Guard of Man ! Great as the Corn Law Battle was, and incalculably great as it will be in its results, Cobden will yet effect another revolution as great as that. He will destroy monopoly in all

its forms; and by reducing our taxation, he will rid the country of its titled paupers, and enable the working man not only to eat cheap bread, but to possess a comfortable home—to educate his children—to live *as a man!*” He named Bright, too, as a fiery and energetic speaker and actor: but intellectually considered, as a Melancthon leaning upon the bosom of Luther. Of Lord John Russel and the Whigs he had no hope; and spoke of them in contemptuous, and not very polite language. But he respected Sir Robert Peel, and regretted that he had “retired from business.” I have previously shown, in an extract from one of his letters, that he had all but prophesied, ten years before the event took place, that Sir Robert would repeal the Corn Laws, as soon as he understood the true commercial position of England; “and now,” he said, “we want Sir Robert to execute his own measures; for we have not got Free Trade yet, and when we do get it, we shall have hard work to keep it.” Speaking of Colonel Thompson—the brave Reformer and accomplished Scholar,—he called him the Prince of Politicians; and said that every letter of the Corn Law Catechism ought to be printed in gold, and read once a day on Sundays, from every pulpit in the land. For this book was Elliott’s gospel; and I am not quite sure that he did not go to heaven with it in his hand. He will read it there to Bentham, as he advised Tennyson when

he died, to read Longfellow's "Evangeline" to Homer.

I ventured to allude to the neglect with which he had been treated by his own party, as a sort of probe which I thought might reach him; but he had no bitterness in his heart against his quondam associates, and fellow workers. "I am no longer wanted," he said; "I have done my work, and can die, when God calls me; thankful that the battle is over, and the good time coming." We were now in the midst of a wood, wandering knee-deep in blue bells, whilst the birds were singing merrily around us. "These," he said, pointing to the flowers, and trees, and birds, "are my companions; from them I derive consolation and hope; for Nature is all harmony and beauty, and man will one day be like her; and the war of castes and the war for bread will be no more." And then he stooped down,—and gathering a flower, placed it affectionately in my hand, and bade me keep it in remembrance of that day's ramble. "For," he added, with the most touching emphasis of voice, "when these old woods are brown with their autumnal attire, I shall, in all probability, be at rest in the grave."

The afternoon of that day was spent in walking up and down the grass-plot before the house, where we continued our morning's conversation, interrupted occasionally by the St. Bernard's dog, who seemed to be jealous of my monopoly

of the Poet, and came to ask for his wonted caresses. We were sometimes joined likewise by Mrs. Elliott and her daughter, who, when they had heard enough of our politics, retired amongst the flowers, and left us alone in the full glory of debate. It is well known that Elliott was a redoubted champion of competition, and that he looked upon communism as fatal to the best interests of man; as a system where *Do-nothing* was to have all, with George Sand for a king. It is related of him, that walking once in company with a leading Socialist of Sheffield, discussing this subject, they came to a sudden turn of the road, which revealed a number of willow trees in a meadow, all recently cut into one uniform shape. At this strange and unexpected sight Elliott extended his arms, and cried aloud, "Behold a society of ready made Socialists!" He was apt enough at this work, and never let slip a good opportunity of illustrating his arguments by such casual examples as fell in his way. His hatred of communism however, blinded him, as usual, to the whole merits of the subject, which he had never studied, and which he said was not worth studying. George Sand was his Mother of Harlots, in the new regime; and he called Louis Blanc the fit legislator of an infernal Noodledom. He regarded the communistic tendencies of the age as the most death-like sign, which if not arrested would plunge the nation into anarchy,

confusion, and ruin. No argument drawn from the anomalies of our social state, could convince him that Capital had not a right to rule the world, according to the law of supply and demand; and no horrible Irish famine; no criminal statistics; no facts of daily starvation; no revelation of fever cellars—of starving needlewomen making shirts at 4d. a day, and that they might not die, compelled to the most pitiable, sorrowful degradation—(such as one cannot think of without tears and agony)—I say none of these things could move Elliott one inch from his political doctrine, or make him doubt for a moment that competition was the great social law of God, destined to rule the world to the end of time. Neither would he admit the validity of the higher argument drawn from the Christian precepts, in favour of co-operation. Free trade, he said, would give us all we wanted of material wealth; and education would gradually introduce a better feeling, and a kinder understanding between masters and men. Not that Elliott was impassible to the sufferings of the classes we have alluded to; for it is notorious that he was keenly alive to them. It was as a poet, however, not as a political economist. In the former capacity he would have died to save them; in the latter, he could have seen the earth filled with graves, rather than have abandoned it to poor Dudevant, “Ashley’s Cow,” and Louis Blanc.

Returning once more to the Corn Law Agitation, he said, "You spoke this morning about the neglect which you imagined me to have received at the hands of the old League; and you are not perhaps aware that the League itself originated in Sheffield; and that the Anti Corn Law Association, commenced the crusade against monopoly, and engaged Paulton as their lecturer." He likewise claimed for himself the honour of having given the first decided impulse to the movement, and by his songs, epigrams and satires, prepared the way for the reception of the Anti-Corn Law doctrines. He spoke too with great and pardonable pride, upon his position with respect to the Corn Law Agitation. "I have won my name as the "Rhymer of the Revolution," he said, "And am prouder of that distinction, than I should be if I were made Poet Laureate of England." He did not seem to be aware that his fame as a poet could not last upon that foundation alone; or that there was any thing in his poetry of which he might be more justly proud than of these political effusions. He was delighted when his correspondents styled him Ebenezer Elliott, C.L.R. (Corn Law Rhymer), and he had a seal with these initials surmounting his own name, which he was in the habit of using upon his letters. In conversation he was sometimes slow and deliberate; condensing his thoughts in as few words as possible, and giving the net result—

as with a "whip of fire," without letting one see the "cold process" of his thinking. Hence he was often sudden and startling in his annunciations; but he was no dogmatist—in the rigid meaning of that word—and if his premises were disputed would take infinite pains to establish them, conducting afterwards the entire argument with logical accuracy. But when the subject was a sacred one to him, and he grew warm over it, there was no bound to his rhetoric. He would utter the finest things, one after another, with the throat of Etna; scattering them about in blasts of fire and thunder. He was a sort of walking earthquake, clad in flowers and rainbows; one of the most beautiful and terrible of men.

I need not say that he was a thorough democrat in principle, for all his poems bear witness to the fact; but he had no patience with Mobocracy; and despised the demagogues, who made it their business to mislead the people, coolly pocketing the wages of their iniquity. At one period of his life, when William Lovett guided the popular movement for reform, Elliott did all in his power to promote the enfranchisement of the people, both by speaking and writing; but when O'Connor and the physical force Chartists appeared, he withdrew from the movement, and warned the working men of the inevitable issue of that business. And whilst we were walking this afternoon in the garden at Har-

gate, he fought his old Reform Battles over again; and told me how he trembled when he had to face a public meeting; how he prepared all his speeches, and committed them to memory, *singing them* in public, to the same tune wherein he had learned them in private. And when we were tired of talking, he conducted me round the house and garden, and over his little farm of corn-fields, grass, and clover. The garden, which was laid out by the poet himself, was very tastefully arranged, having many winding paths in it, running between rich borders of shrubs and flowers. A mound, artificially elevated, on one side of the garden, commanded a beautiful and extensive prospect of hills, woods, dales, and streams. On the west lay a sunny dell, and just beyond it, on the side of the hill, stood a farm-house and buildings—whilst several cows were grouped under the branches of a large beech tree in the farm croft. Lady Wood, West Wood, Spring Wood, and Nun Wood, stretched away at our feet, covering many hundred acres, and forming a fine foreground to the wide and distant scenery, lying between them and the Huddersfield Hills which bounded the horizon. “We can see West Nab, and Home Moss distinctly from this mound,” said the poet, “and in damp weather they look as if they would come into my parlour windows.” We proceeded from this mound down the hill side, which the poet had

planted with trees and shrubs, to the little dell below, where a trout stream went babbling along over its shallow and stony bed. When we arrived opposite the corn-field, just as they slope down to the lowlands—we being still in the dell—the Poet led me to a tree, which spread its friendly branches over the beautiful waving grass at our feet. “Under this tree,” he said, with a plaintive and serious voice,—“I mean to be buried. I shall sleep well enough here, out of the consecrated churchyard; and who knows but I may feel the daisies growing over my grave, and hear the birds sing to me in my winding-sheet!” He once desired to be buried at Shirecliffe, under the Gospel Tree, which he has celebrated in his poem of the “Ranter;” and had even driven a large nail in it, and communicated the fact to two beloved friends in Sheffield, that they might know it, and see his wishes enforced, in case of his sudden death. But his sepulture on his own estate at Hargate was a more pleasing and touching desire, full of pastoral simplicity, and patriarchal beauty. That it was his earnest desire to be thus buried, and that he had long contemplated the event, there can be no doubt. Writing to a friend, (Isaac Ironsides of Sheffield) in September, 1848, he says: “I suffer great pain, and after losing more than twenty eight pounds in weight, I continue to lose at the rate of one pound weekly. You cannot fatten calves in that way! If I am

not removed suddenly, I shall last till April next." He then continues, "I wish to be buried in my skin, at the foot of Lord Galway's ash tree here. My folks are all for holy ground, and costs; so I suppose I must submit; and Rotherham Church being full of corruption, and one of our neighbouring clergymen happening to be here, I have been trying to bargain with him for a grave at Darfield. Could you think it! Sinking the offal, it will cost 40s. for the use of the ground alone." In this way he grimly played with the subject, but it had a deep hold of him nevertheless; as the little poem entitled "Let me Rest"—in which he desires to be buried in Barnsdale, "where the wayside daisies grow, where the winds a Maying go," will sufficiently testify. Neither did he look on death as trifling and unimportant, but as a serious event, upon which were suspended the awful reprisals of a future judgment and an eternal doom. He confessed, however, that he knew nothing of this great Hereafter, whose starry curtain all mortals are forbidden to undraw. But he clung with an infinite faith to the idea of immortality, and knew that he must soon unriddle the problem, which it presents to us.

As we returned to the front of the house, he pointed to the wooded hills in the East, where the seat of Sir Charles Wood (present Chancellor of the Exchequer) was situated; with Conisbro

Castle and Hickleton Hall, in the distance; all of them visible in clear weather. We then crossed the garden, and went to the back of the house, where we had a fine view of Barnsdale Moor—with its gorse and bracken—whilst lines of dark trees fenced it on the right, and thick towering woods on the left. Descending the hill side, which was well planted with trees, we again entered the dell; and the Poet led me to a little fish pond which he had laid down himself, and stocked with trout from the neighbouring streams. It was a cool and beautiful spot, like some quiet nook in the mythic vale of Tempe. The birds sang there all day; and the pond itself was supplied by water which gushed in living streams out of the hill side. Elliott promised himself many happy hours in fishing and musing upon its banks. He had been a fisher in early life, and the statement of this fact, led naturally to Izaak Walton and his beautiful book on Angling, which contains, perhaps, the very best pastoral description in our language. I found that Elliott knew Walton by heart, and loved the fine old commonwealthsman too, notwithstanding his loyalty to the king. All books, indeed, which were true reflexes of nature, were his delight. Hence the Howitts were his especial favourites; two of Nature's most beautiful children, whose lives were all sunshine and poetry. He spoke of their mutual wanderings, and visits to remarka-

ble places, as a rare and pleasant feature in the married life of literary people ; and so inseperable were they, he said, in his mind, that he always associated with their names, the old William and Mary Shillings.

When we returned to the house, we found Mrs. Elliott and her daughter waiting for us at the tea table. The little yellow canary was still singing, perched outside its cage ; and the distant lowland landscape was beginning to darken in the blue twilight of evening, as we gazed upon it through the open casement. The room in which we were assembled was large and convenient ; having the true household look about it ; with none of the modern finery which marks the sitting rooms of the wealthy. There was the Poet's library against the wall opposite the window, which, with his easy chair, and the wooden box wherein he kept his MSS., are now the most interesting of these household relics. The piano he did not look upon as a luxury, but as a necessary article, which ought to appertain to every home, even the poorest ;—and a deal box, instead of a mahogany case, to put the instrument in, would bring it, he said, within reach of the humblest means. Music was a great source of consolation to him, and often charmed him into forgetfulness of his bodily pain. For music has a language of her own ; and speaks to us of things which, as Jean Paul says, “ in all our endless life we have not found, and

shall not find." The best parlour was opposite to the one we were sitting in, and contained portraits of the Poet, his wife, and children. That of Elliott himself, is the best I have yet seen ; although it is far from being a true representation of the man. It is singular, that all the attempts made by various artists to imprison him upon canvass, have been unsuccessful. William Howitt compliments Margaret Gillies upon the sketch she made of him, which appeared in the "People's Journal," some two years ago ; but it is a most comical failure ; and reminds me of the following criticism which the Poet passed upon four portraits of him in oil, which appeared in the first exhibition on behalf of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute. "Taking them altogether, I could imagine them to represent four important scenes in the life of a Tailor : first, the Tailor turned gentleman ; second, the Tailor going a picturesqueing ; third, the Tailor seeking cabbage ; fourth, the Tailor selecting his own grave." As I said, however, the portrait possessed by his family is the best I have seen.

After tea we fell gradually into an earnest conversation upon the literature of the day. I have already spoken of his admiration of Byron, Keats, and other poets, and in alluding to the Life of Keats, by R. Monckton Milnes—which he thought a fine piece of Biography on the whole, although rather too hasty in its finish—he said the death of Keats, as described by his

friend Spenser, was the most painful and deeply affecting scene upon record. And, indeed, the world is deeply indebted to this true and beautiful brother, who, with the love of St. John in his great and devoted heart, watched the poor dying poet—day after day—week after week, and never left him until the stern work of death was over. “Had Keats lived,” said Elliott, “there is nothing which he might not have achieved in the way of poetry.” It was remarked that this poem called “St. Agnes Eve,” had no rival in our language as a picture of mediæval life; that its feudal and religious architecture was perfect, and that all the characters were as truly and faithfully drawn, as those in the *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakspeare, of which indeed, it was a kind of episode. “But the *Hyperion*, Sir?” said Elliott, “What do you think of that?” That it is a beautiful ruin, created and deserted by the gods. “Aye,” he answered, “And what a ruin!” He then read the following lines upon Keats, which are published in the first volume of his “*More Prose and Verse*,” &c.—

“He lived, and loved! He was a power
That left its thought more felt than spoken:
‘A fading flower, a falling shower,
A breaking wave.’—which now is broken.

Can greatness die and be unborn?
It cannot, thou in scorn repliest;
He perished in his scorn of scorn,
And lowest deemed, of all was highest.

A vapour quenched his visions grand,
 Ah ! hope destroyed is worth's undoing !
 He left the deathless deed he planned,
 A deed undone !—And what a Ruin !”

We then spoke of Scott and Tennyson, of Leigh Hunt, Charles Lamb, and Philip Bailey. Scott was his greatest favourite, and he quoted long passages from “Marmion” and the “Lady of the Lake.” “I envy Scott his narrative power in poetry,” he said, “more than any other faculty which he possesses. Nothing is more difficult than to tell a tale well in rhyme ; and Scott has succeeded better than any one else. I have begun,” he continued “a narrative epic in twelve books, four of which are finished ; and each book is complete in itself. I will read it to you before you go, and you will then see in my own failure, why I envy Scott.” I afterwards heard the poem in question, which is printed in his new volumes ; and I cannot understand why it has dropped silently from the press. For it is a poem of great power and beauty, and contains passages superior to any thing which Elliott had previously written. There is a little incongruity and indistinctness perhaps in some of the characters, but this is amply atoned for by the general skill of the narrative, and the harmony of its plan and details. There are one or two blots in it, however, of which he was duly warned by friendly critics ; and these consist in that love of the horrible, which he says in his Au-

tobiography, haunted him so in his young days. I allude more particularly to the picture of the drowned woman who fell a victim to Lord Konig's lust—which occurs in the sixteenth section of the second book of this poem—and which, in spite of the moral and poetical drapery thrown over it by the Poet, is a loathesome, and not a "*beauteous horror*." This was pointed out to him when he read it; and it was endeavoured to be shown that things horrible and repulsive in themselves, were not fit subjects for poetry, and could not be elevated, even by the highest genius, into the region of human sympathy. He acknowledged the justice of this criticism and promised to alter the passage, and I have no doubt would have done so—if death had not summoned him away so soon after this conversation.

Elliott loved Tennyson for his pathos, and the courtly finish of his marvellous verse. He has caught a few echoes of the Marianne in a soliloquy which occurs in the opening of his epic, but Tennyson was too dreamy a poet to make much impression upon the Corn Law Rhymer; although he spoke of him with affection and reverence. Bailey's Festus had a stronger hold of him; but he knew very well how to discriminate between a panorama of pictures, and a poetic work of art. His admiration of Festus was therefore limited to its glorious passages, and wild flights of imagina-

tion ; and to the lyrics scattered through its pages. He severely condemned the theological soliloquies which darken the last edition of this poem, and so painfully burden its action. "The book," he said, "wanted cutting down before, in the first edition ; and now it sprawls its unwieldy length to such an appalling extent, that its many and manifest beauties will hardly save it from perishing."

He spoke with great enthusiasm of Carlyle, and had a copy of "*The French Revolution, a History*" in his library. He was a long while before he knew what to make of that book ;—but when he had grown familiar with its strange terminology, and could steer his way amid the endless pageants that swept in glaring colours past him, upon that wild revolutionary ocean of blood and fire, he found it the most vivid and splendid of histories. He called it poetry in prose ; and named Carlyle the Homer of his age. And then as he warmed in his eulogies, he rose from his seat, and advancing to the bookcase took down the first volume — the Bastille — and said, "Now, sir, I will give you a scene from this book that would wring tears from marble." He then read, with a voice full of pathos, the following letter signed Queret Demery, which was found in one of the cells of the Bastille, after its demolition by the populace :

"If, for my consolation, Monseigneur would

grant me, for the sake of God, and the most Blessed Trinity, that I could have news of my dear wife; *were it only her name on a card*, to show that she is alive! It were the greatest consolation I could receive; and I should for ever bless the greatness of Monseigneur."

"There, sir," he said, wiping away the tears which streamed down his furrowed cheeks, "that is the most painful and agonizing passage in the language. You see it has made a woman of me; and I should be a brute if I could not weep over such great, sad sufferings; such calm resignation in the midst of I know not how many years of despair; which only breaks silence at last in a touching, heart-breaking appeal to the d——d Monseigneur that it would please him to send the poor captive tidings of his dear wife, were it only 'her name on a card.'" "O God!" he continued, "how dreadfully the wail of that poor, unknown, broken heart, sounds in the ears of men for ever." "Bless the greatness of Monseigneur!" he added, walking fiercely up and down the room; "Yes! and pray too that Hell might be hot enough for him! God forgive these scoundrels, sir; it is not in me!"

Later in the evening he asked me if I had seen Emerson during his visit to this country, and when I replied that I had the honour to entertain him during the greater part of his stay in Huddersfield, he requested me to describe the man, and his bearing in social life. My

great reverence for Emerson made me draw, perhaps, too partial a picture of him; for the Poet remarked that such a high and impassable nature, with such simple and winning manners, rarely met together in so illustrious a person; and that he approached the ideal he had formed of the great Plato. He had not read Emerson however, and was only acquainted with him through extracts from his printed works, which he had seen in the periodicals of the day; and through the public reports of his lectures. If he had known more of him, he would have liked him less; for so called the Transcendental Philosophy was to him a stumbling-block. He was too strongly tied with his natal-cord to the objective world, to appreciate the speculations and inner revealings of the Massachusetts Philosopher; although his mind was broad enough in its æsthetic and intellectual relations, and could grasp all the beauty of the universe, and resolve—in some fashion at least—not a few of the moral problems which affect the destiny of the race. But beauty was not symbolical to him; or at least, not in the same sense as it was to Shakespere, Plotinus, or Swedenberg. It was God's silent gospel, revealing God as *The Beautiful*; and beauty was his divinest Idea. He did not see that beauty was fleeting and evanescent; the mere garment of the Invisible, behind which HE sat enthroned, whose are all the worlds. And be-

cause he could not pierce through the painted robes of the Phenominal, he never read the Divine Secrets, and could form therefore, no conception of the "Ubi" or "Whereness" of Emerson. Still there was enough of the practical and homely in this author to recommend itself to the Poet; and as the newspapers, which always cater for the mass, instinctively assimilated such passages, as they were thrown off by the Reviewers, Elliott's estimate of Emerson was formed almost exclusively upon them. He much regretted that neither Carlyle nor Emerson had visited him; especially since they had both been in his neighbourhood. He was informed that Carlyle had once set off with Monckton Milnes to visit him, but was detained on the way by some occurrence which had slipped the memory of the speaker; and moreover that Carlyle had asked many questions about him, upon one or two occasions which were specified; and Elliott in his turn now asked for particulars respecting Carlyle. The conversation terminated by the Poet expressing his deep regret that the opportunity alluded to was gone by for ever. For now, he said, we shall never meet, unless in Heaven.

I have previously given the general characteristics of Elliott's conversational speech; but I find it impossible to do him justice in this respect. The poor fragments which I have rendered in these pages will give no idea of him;

except to those who knew him personally ; (for they can vivify these broken sentences, by putting the fire of the *man* into them) ; to all others they must be comparatively lifeless. And this seems to be the fittest place to describe Elliott's personal appearance, not as he was when a young man, but at the time I am now speaking of. Most of his readers imagine him to have been a man of large proportions, a true son of the forge—broad-set, strong, and muscular, as a Cyclop. But he was the reverse of all this. In stature he was not more than five feet six inches ; of a slender make, and a bilious-nervous temperament. His hair was quite grey ; and his eyes, which were of a greyish blue, were surmounted by thick bushy brows, which looked like the thunder clouds of Jove. His forehead was not broad, but rather narrow ; and his head was small. There was great pugnacity in the mouth, especially when he was excited ; but in repose it seemed to smile, more in consciousness of strength, however, than in sunny unconscious beauty. His nostrils were full of scorn ; and his eyes—which were the true indices of his soul—literally smote you with fire, or beamed with kindness and affection, according to the mood he was in. In earnest debate, his whole face was lighted up, and became terrible and tragic. At such times he paced up and down the room, with a firm foot, full of trampling scorn, and his words were whirlwinds. In gayer moments he would at-

tempt comedy, and I have heard him recite passages from Molliere—who was a great favourite with him—until I scarcely knew whether to laugh or weep. For he had no comic faculty, and all his attempts that way, were mere travestied tragedy. His voice was as musical as a lute, and capable of the deepest pathos. He was very fond of that fine old song by Burns “Ye banks and braes of bonny Doon,” and during the evening I am now speaking of, he recited and sang it with great effect, notwithstanding his weakness. Fancy the grey, old man, standing, during this performance, behind his easy chair; dressed in a blue frock-coat; a blue waistcoat, which came down to the hips, and a pair of blue trowsers; for this was his ordinary attire; and he walked about his garden with a blue cap on. These facts are, to me at least, very interesting; and I think they are not without general interest.

He had a great love for the Latin and Greek classics, which he read through English translations. Homer, Hesiod, Sophocles, and Tacitus were his chief favourites. He was well acquainted with “Æschylus,” was keenly alive to its beauties, and was fond of comparing the different translations of this tragedy; never failing to adopt the best renderings of particular lines. In a book called a “Monopolygraph,” by Samuel Gower, a scholar and a poet of Holmfirth, near Huddersfield, he found the following beautiful translation of one of the most

difficult lines in this tragedy, which he was never weary of repeating. I will quote the passage; and it is the last line to which I now allude :—

PROMETHEUS (*solus*).

“ Oh, thou divine and boundless atmosphere !
And you, ye swift-winged winds of heaven ; and thou
Oh countless laughter of the salt-sea waves !”

There can be no question that this is a great improvement upon the old translations—and that it is rendered in the true spirit of the original.

I said that Elliott's prejudices were very strong, and will now relate an anecdote to illustrate this fact, although indeed, such illustration is scarcely necessary. We had been speaking about mesmerism : and Mrs. Elliott, who had seen many experiments performed by Dr. Holland of Sheffield, confessed her entire belief in this mysterious and occult science. The Poet, however, was loud in his denunciations of it, and insisted that it was mere collusion and quackery. As this was a charge brought against many men whom I knew to have practised mesmerism, and whose characters were unimpeachable, I ventured to remonstrate with him, intimating at the same time that I had proved the truth of mesmerism myself, in various cases, and at various times. “ If that be the case,” said Elliott, “ you can mesmerize me. Come, sir,

try your power ; and if you succeed I will believe in this infernal art." I was unwilling, however, to make the attempt, because I do not like playing at such a serious game ; but I told him I had no doubt I should succeed, in case I tried. He called this a subterfuge, and laughed at me with the merriest mockery ; literally crowing with exultation, and repeating his challenge, as he paced up and down the room. At the request of his daughters and Mrs. Elliott, who were very anxious that he should be convinced, I at last accepted the challenge. Accordingly, the Poet sat down in his chair, and the moment my hand came in contact with his head, he shrunk as if struck by a Voltaic Pile, uttered a deep sigh, fell back upon his chair, and all consciousness fled from him. I shall never forget my sensations at that moment, as I contemplated the pale and lifeless form of the Poet—thus suddenly silenced—all the fire of his spirit quenched, and put out as if by the hand of Death. His daughter, however, became alarmed, and to relieve her I began to demesmerize him. He gradually roused himself, and when consciousness returned, he rubbed his eyes, started from his chair, and exclaimed, "What have I been asleep?" "Yes," was the triumphant reply of his daughter ; and Mrs. Elliott clapped her hands in chorus. The Poet, however, was still dubious ; and would have it that he had fallen asleep from exhaustion.

In religious matters it is difficult to say what he believed, and what he disbelieved. Like the great mass of literary men, he had no creed, properly so called, and no faith in sects or parties. Still he loved Christianity for the human beauty which pervades, it and the divine revelations which it unfolds to man. In one of his letters to a friend, already quoted, he says, "I am a Christian from conviction, and because I cannot help it." The same friend to whom this letter was written confesses himself much indebted to Elliott for removing his religious doubts, although the method adopted by the poet was strange, and quite alien to orthodox teaching. "For instance," says the party alluded to, "on my expressing a conjecture, or a hope, or a belief, of which he saw the absurdity, he would, by a single striking sentence, send a flash of conviction to my mind, which suddenly demolished my airy castles. He well knew that wholesale doubt led to enquiry, and enquiry to consistent and lasting faith. He seldom meddled with theological views, and thought religion more a passion than a belief. The character, real works, and doctrine of Christ, he maintained were only to be accounted for, on the grounds of God's presence and power in Christ. Lastly, he had a strong faith in the immortality of the soul." Such is the account furnished me by this Sheffield friend; but it must be remembered that this is a reminiscence of years long

since passed away; and I have no means of knowing what were Elliott's latest convictions on these important subjects. I will quote, however, a passage from one of his letters to me, dated September 11th, 1848, in which, speaking upon the availableness of prayer, he says: "Long, long ago, perhaps fifteen years, when food-taxing and much-mortgaged Chandos—who grieved to see anything eatable escape his maw—had been accusing his victims of luxurious living, and want of forethought, I prayed aloud in the presence of eight or ten thousand Sheffielders, in Paradise Square assembled, 'That he might live to know what it is to be poor.' Though a murmured, yet sublime, 'Amen!' responded to me, persons present, and afterwards persons not present, called me '*monster*,' with the saving clause, '*if not madman*.' But God heard my prayer. I then ought not to say that supplications addressed immediately to Him are useless. The following, however, is my creed: The only true, because the only useful prayer, is that which human beings (after vainly doing their best for themselves) address to their fellow-creatures for assistance. *And it justifies begging!* Unless desperate people are to be forced to that awful and sole remaining alternative, which they have just the same right to use, that a drowning man has to catch at a straw."

The best summary, however, of his religious convictions is contained in the following poem:

RELIGION.

“What is religion? speak the truth in love,
Reject no good : mend, if thou canst, thy lot.
Doubting, enquire,—nor dictate till thou prove.
Enjoy thy own—exceed not, trespass not.
Pity the scorers of life’s meanest thing.
If wronged, forgive—that hate may lose his sting.
Think, speak, work, get; bestow, or wisely keep.
So live, that thou may’st smile and no one weep.
Be blessed—like birds that sing because they love.
And bless—like rivers singing to the sun,
Giving and taking blessings, as they run;
Or soft voiced showers, that cool the answering grove
When cloudy wings are seen in heaven displayed,
And blessings brighten o’er the freshened sod
Till earth is like the countenance of God.
This is Religion ! saith the Bard of Trade.”

In the year 1848, I proposed to deliver a lecture upon his writings, and he furnished me with the following particulars, which, added to the sketch I have already drawn of his person and manners, will complete the picture.

“You may say,” he begins, “that there is nothing remarkable in Elliott’s personal appearance, except, perhaps, his gentle manners. He has neither a shoulder like a leg of mutton, nor a hinder-end broader than a blacksmith’s bellows. He is five feet seven inches high, and slimly rather than strongly made. His eyes are dim and pale; mostly kind in their expression, but sometimes wild. His features are harsh, but

expressive, and not unpleasing. On the whole, he is just the man who, if unknown, would pass unnoticed any where."

This letter was written October 5th, 1848, and on the 7th of the same month, I received the following:

"What you have to say of me will not be complete without this addition, which you can use, or not: He is a politician and a poet. With his politics, you know, I have here nothing to do. Poets, you also know, are usually people who, having expressed in verse, thoughts not fit or not good enough for prose, get pensioned or die in the workhouse. It is a real distinction to the Corn Law Rhymer, that in his grey hairs, and in the land of palaces and workhouses, he is not yet either a pauper or a pensioner. Tired, and comparatively poor, but self-sustained, like one who, after hard labour, reaches his home and rests, he sits on his own Hill top."

In conclusion, I will quote what the Poet's son writes me respecting his father's last illness: "It was early in 1848, that he perceived the first symptoms of declining health. He was troubled with acute internal pain of a fixed character. It was cancer of the rectum. By means of the strongest stimulants and opiates, his life was prolonged until the close of 1849. Then his sufferings rapidly increased. The last month of his life was one of great torture, and equal fortitude; and he died in the presence of

his family early on the morning of the first of December, and was buried, in great privacy, as he wished to be, in the churchyard of the beautiful little village of Darfield. The tower of the church can be seen from the windows of his house, and forms a distinguishing feature in a landscape that was dear to his eyes.

“What can I say more? Shall I tell you how beautifully, how poetically he watched the approach of death? ‘Francis,’ he often said to me, ‘I am to die; and if I am to live in pain, I do not ask to live. I could have wished to finish *Eth-Kon-Tel* (this was the name he had intended to give to a narrative poem, consisting of three narrative poems, each a part of the same story, and yet a complete story in itself—*Etheline* being the first of them). I die with my work undone—with my faculties undeveloped. I cannot help mourning over *Eth-Kon-Tel*. He hastened the contemplated marriage of his daughter Fanny—his *beloved* daughter—whose name was her mother’s, and desired to be buried in the church where she was married. On the wedding day he was supported from the bed to the window, to see the return of the party from church. The fatigue was almost more than he was capable of bearing. ‘My child,’ he said to Fanny, ‘I feel so weak that an infant could fell me with a primrose.’ He heard a robin singing one morning, in the garden beneath his chamber window, and composed the lines I send

you below, dictating them to me, as he lay upon his pillow. They are his last notes.

“ ‘ Thy notes sweet Robin, soft as dew,
Heard soon or late, are dear to me.
To music I could bid adieu,
But not to thee.

When from my eyes, this life's throng
Has passed away, no more to be ;
Then Autumn's primrose, Robin's song,
Return to me.' ”

And thus in strains of gentle music, did the spirit of our brave Poet pass away for ever from the earth. Those who knew him best, loved him most ; and will feel for some time yet to come as if, in his death, “ some great wrong ” had been done to them. Time, however, will bring with it its own wisdom, and convert this private and apparent wrong into universal justice, which all shall see and acknowledge. In the meanwhile, let us be thankful for the rich legacy which the Poet has left us in his songs, and for the example which he has set us of a life lived for a purpose.

APPENDIX.

MR. THOMAS LISTER, the Barnsley Poet, has sent me the letter and extracts which I print below ; and I am glad of so favourable an opportunity as the present, to say a word or two respecting this excellent man, whom Elliott delighted to call his friend ; and for whom I also have great respect and esteem. Mr. Lister was on terms of intimacy with the Corn Law Rhymer, for upwards of fifteen years ; and I am glad to find that he is arranging his recollections of his brother Poet, for the press. During the last eight or nine years, Mr. Lister was a frequent guest at Elliott's house ; for Barnsley and Hargate Hill are not more than seven or eight miles apart. It was my good fortune to visit Elliott—when I was first introduced to him—with Mr. Lister, and I recollect with pleasure the beautiful drive we had through that richly-wooded country, and the many objects of interest which Lister pointed out to me on the way. When we arrived at Hargate

Hill, I was surprised to find Elliott a man of short stature, instead of the bulky Titan I had pictured him in imagination. The sound of our gig wheels in the court-yard brought him to the door. He was dressed in a complete suit of blue, and wore a blue cap, as I have described him in the third part of this memoir. He welcomed us with real hospitality, and as his serving-man was away from the house, he fell to, with great dexterity, and began to unbuckle our harness himself. His wife and daughter received us in the hall, and ushered us into the sitting-room, where we spent a happy and memorable evening. I had been invited to spend a few days with the Poet, and after Mr. Lister was gone, Elliott and I made a night of it.

And now let me give a short sketch of Lister's life in the words of a friendly and competent critic:—

“Our rustic Bard was lured by the charms of Nature, which luxuriate in his native valley, and by the trains of contemplation to which existing events prompted him, to indulge in the sweet seducements of Poesy, before he had acquired almost any acquaintance with the proudest and least perishable of her songs. Possessing but a slight knowledge of the rules of composition, and still less of the laws which regulate the standard of taste—he has composed, chiefly whilst pursuing his daily toils in the open air, many productions which have found

favour amongst those who know him, and have excited a warm interest throughout the country.

“Some time after his ‘warblings wild’ had attracted the notice of his townsmen, and particularly of James Porter, Esq., of Park House, his warmest advocate and weightiest supporter, a vacancy occurred in the office of post-master, at Barnsley, his native town. The appointment of a successor rested with Lord Morpeth. His lordship, remembering the Yorkshire bard who had been introduced to him during the election for Yorkshire, generously nominated him to the office, and was seconded in his choice by the principal inhabitants of the town. But an insuperable obstacle prevented the fulfilment of his wishes: an oath was then, by law, required, previous to an instalment in a Government office. Though the contrast between the management of a horse and cart (which was then Lister’s occupation,) and that of a profitable situation, was greatly in favour of the latter, yet Lister could only fill this post by sacrificing his principle. He had been trained up under the eye of honest and revered parents, in the principles of the Society of Friends, and hence his objection to taking an oath.”

I may add that a very interesting correspondence took place between the young poet and Lord Morpeth upon this subject of the oath, which ended in mutual regrets on the part of the writers; for as Lister could not violate his

conscience by taking the required oath, neither could the noble and generous Lord suspend the existing law, in the objector's favour. Lister, therefore, lost the situation and kept his conscience, like a brave and truthful man.

A subsequent alteration in the law, enabled him, however, when the office became again vacant, to accept the appointment, which he still retains. The "warblings wild" alluded to in the previous extracts, were published in a volume called "*The Rustic Wreath*," and had a sale of upwards of 3,000 copies. Some of the poems are beautiful; and they are all far above mediocrity. In character they are simple, and descriptive; sometimes pathetic and humorous. The "*Yorkshire Hirings*" is full of fun, and hits off the provincial dialect in admirable style. Since his duties commenced as post-master, Mr. L. has written no more poems. He has devoted himself, however, to science and scientific pursuits; and is a good botanist, ornithologist, and geologist. If he would write a description of his own neighbourhood, after the manner of "*White's Natural History of Selbourne*," (for which he is well qualified,) he would produce a book that would add considerably to his reputation, and give pleasure and instruction to all.

THOMAS LISTER TO JANUARY SEARLE.

"Post Office, Barnsley, 4th mo. 21st, 1850.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"I was at Leeds yesterday, and was reminded (from certain matters which then transpired) of thy request, for me to furnish a few particulars of the literary life of our lamented friend, Ebenezer Elliott. Although, at the time, I had no intention of undertaking this duty, to any extent, partly from a cause which operates in both of us, though diversely—that is, a dread of taking up the pen for lengthy communications—and partly, because the experiences I had known of Elliott's literary life were too much connected with myself, to be either generally interesting, or even desirable to be made public;—yet, notwithstanding these objections, I had previously formed a resolve to collect, from my manifold reminiscences of the last fifteen years, a few choice souvenirs of my wanderings, conversations, and correspondence, with Elliott. That task has proceeded no farther than the opening step; and I cannot answer for my morbid indolence—so far as writing is concerned—when I shall be able to bring it to a conclusion. I have seen nothing, yet, to satisfy me, either in delineations of the life and character, or criticisms on the writings, recently ushered into the world, of this extraordinary man; nor is it in my power to supply the desideratum. His *'More Prose and Verse'* was reviewed by the *'Examiner'*; many of the poetic excellencies contained therein were ably pointed out; but I differ greatly with them in their under estimate of his capability for prose composition; witness the beauty and strength combined in his Lectures on the English Poets, three of which now appear in the second volume, just issued. This volume, the *'Spectator'* of yesterday reviews. I think the editor's discriminating notice of

the merits, and demerits, of the poetry therein, is just—even the severer portions thereof, which condemn the unreflecting manner in which everything, good, bad, or indifferent, that has proceeded from Elliott's pen for the last few years,—gleanings from "*Tail*," the *Sheffield Papers*, and innumerable periodicals—have been issued in these posthumous volumes. The critic supposes the blame to rest with the over anxiety of survivors; it was not so. Elliott's own deliberate will has resolved, and his own uncontrolled act has accomplished, their publication; every line was sent to the publisher before his death; and it was only the last few proofs that his energy—scarce vanquished by the gripe of Death—failed to overlook. Even that coarseness, and virulence towards the landed gentry, manifested in his style, when those vexatious questions were touched, was adopted by him on principle. When I have contended the point with him, as to marring the beauty of a fine passage, or a whole poem, by some violent or unpoetic expression, he always had a reason to offer for such violation of the poetic proprieties. Take the following as an example of what I mean; the passage occurs at the close of the '*Splendid Village*:'—

" 'Path of the quiet fields, which oft, of yore,
Led me at morn o'er Shenstone's page to pore ;

* * * *

Sweet, dewy, sunny, flowery footpath, thou
Art gone for ever like the poor man's cow.
No more the plous youth, with book in hand,
Spelling the words he fain would understand,
Shall bless thy mazes, while the evening bell
Sounds o'er the valley, softened, up the dell.
But, from the window of the loyal inn,
The great unpaid, who cannot err or sin,
Well pleas'd, shall see the pomp of LAWYER RIDGE,
And poor SQUIRE GRUB's starv'd maids and dandy bridge,'
 &c., &c.

" Again, in that noble delineation of mountain gran-

deur and desolate sterility—the scenery of which is embodied in that picture of him which hangs in the parlour at Hargate Hill:

“ ‘ I thank ye, billows of a granite sea !
That the brib'd plough, defeated, halts below,
And thanks, majestic barrenness! to thee,
For one grim region, in a land of woe,
Where tax-sown wheat, and paupers will not grow.' ”

“ To my objections as to having so rich a draught of pleasure so rudely dashed from my lips, he would reply, ‘ I always endeavour to use words which express my meaning. I wish to stir up indignation against Lawyer Ridge, and Squire Grub.’ Again, in the other passage, I name the ‘ *bribed plough*,’ because it is so in effect; and ‘ *tax-sown wheat*’ because the land is *sown in taxes*.”

“ To this I should acquiesce in silence; I could not gainsay the logic, whatever I might advance as to the poetry. But I by no means admit the supposition of the ‘ *Spectator*,’ that the cause of this coarse violence has been the narrowness of his education; not intended by the ‘ *Spectator*’ to be considered as such, perhaps, as to *book-learning*, but with respect to a certain low provincial range of association, and acquaintance, and an evident manifestation from his writings, for him to be the head of the company. To speak from what I know, I have almost always had the pleasure to meet him, when in company with minds of a superior stamp, to the ordinary run of society. For instance—I met him first with Pemberton; after one of the spirited delineations of Shakespere, given by the latter, in a manner that I have never seen excelled; (and Pemberton was able to give two hours’ talk after that effort) on which occasion Elliott as well as myself were the interested listeners of the company. On another occasion I have met him, with the same party and others, at the house of Thomas Asline Ward, then M.P. for

Sheffield—to whom as '*The Man of the People*,' one of Elliott's poems is dedicated. I have met him also often with Mr. Stannus, an eloquent minister of the Unitarian persuasion; with John Fowler, President of the Sheffield Institute, and Editor of the '*Remains of C. Pemberton*;' with Spencer Hall, &c. &c.

"Then there are the interviews and communications of our humble selves, with this inestimable bard; and, spite of the '*Spectator*,' we will not class ourselves either with the narrow or vulgar. In addition to all these, there are numerous distinguished men that Elliott, at home and abroad, has met and communicated with; amongst others Southey, to whom he gives the credit of having '*taught him the art of Poetry*;' and Dr. Bowring, both of whom had a main hand in making his talents more widely known. Also Colonel Thompson and O'Connell, at great meetings, both in Manchester and London. Adams, (Junius Redivivus) who often visited him at Sheffield and Hargate Hill; Montgomery and John Holland, fellow townsmen and co-labourers in the wide, pleasant fields of poesy: enough, amply so, to prove the superior class of his companionship. Then as to his '*seeking to be the head of the company*,' the contrary was the case. Though he was civil and amiable to all, gentle and simple, that came across him, or with whom he came in contact, he rather shunned than sought company or public notice. To any conversation of interest he was always a willing listener; and never assumed to be the Oracle of the circle. On Corn-Law and monied subjects, we grant he was allowed to discourse, *ad libitum*. In all my intercourse with him, I never observed in him an ungenerous action, nor heard—except of factions—an unkind word. My first interview, detailed in an accompanying extract, was followed by many others, before he left Sheffield. I accompanied him to one or two sites in that neighbourhood, but he did not fix on one, eligible as a residence. About ten years ago he bought, at great advantage, a plot of ten acres, at Hargate Hill,

on Houghton Common. He has since told me, that more than the purchase money was soon made of the bark and a portion of the wood. I walked over with him to view the spot, through the vale of the Dearne, whose sylvan pastoral scenes delighted him greatly. There was nothing on the estate but a small cottage, which now forms the kitchen of the poet's house. At a second visit with him, J. Fowler, and other Sheffield friends, something in the way of planning the building and grounds was accomplished. The neighbouring farmers laughed at the idea of a comfortable spot and productive grounds being made on a mere 'fox cover;' and prophesied him a plentiful succession of crops of whins and brackens. Even his Sheffield friends augured great discomfort, almost approaching to starvation, in the probability that he would have everything to fetch from Barnsley; and Fowler humorously remarked, that he had better affix a board at the end of his house, inscribed '*Ebenezer Elliott, Common Carrier.*' What the result of his patient toils and well-executed plans prove, I need not say,—it is a most delightful home for a retired poet, and up to the last few weeks before his death, he busied himself with projects to make the grounds still more pleasant and picturesque.

"I have made it a point to visit him at least once every season; and many and delightful are the rambles we have taken in that richly-diversified locality, to which Howitt, with all his descriptive powers, has done nothing like justice in his unsatisfactory account of a visit to Elliott's abode.

"New Park Spring, conjoined to Lady Cross Wood; the bold stretch of billowy woodland which his residence commands; with the Dearne valley and wooded slopes beyond, on the Barnsley side, were frequently explored by us. The Lady-Cross was pointed out by him amid these woods separating two domains. Then, in the opposite direction, was the delightful walk over the common, blossoming with gorse and broom, to

Howell Wood—a walk thou wilt remember well, being taken on our memorable first visit.

“At another time we should diverge by Howell Spring, a small fountained glen, abounding with the freshest and purest water, by Clayton-in-the-Clay—through Hooton Pagnell Park to Watchley Craggs, returning by Fritchley Hall. Another rich and commanding scene was found in prolonging the route, over Houghton Common to Kirby Common, examining the sole remaining oak of the colossal couple, ‘Adam and Eve,’ one of which sheltered Nevison during his sojourn at Kingstone Hill. Then descending the elevated slopes, by Brierley Manor, we took the field path to Grimethorpe, and returned through Lady Cross Wood. In these rambles, Elliott’s intense love for all natural objects was continually manifested: and his marvellous power of depicting them vividly. Though presuming on no scientific skill, he had considerable knowledge of trees, flowers, and birds, by their common names, and was always glad to increase his stock of information, from those who had gone more minutely into the various walks of natural history and science. To me the most interesting journey we took was in his small pony-gig through Thurnscoe, Bolton-on-Dearne, to Conisborough Castle. The spacious valley of the Don, (a rich alluvial bed lying between the magnesian limestone beds on the one hand, stretching in a bold continuous ridge from Hickleton Park to Sprotborough, and the first swell of the coal measures on the side of Conisborough and Dennaby)—the neat village of Conisborough where we dined, the frowning keep of the old Saxon Castle towering above town and river—and above all the locality itself, stamped with the ineffable triumphs of Scott’s genius, in his incomparable ‘Ivanhoe,’ made a permanent impression on Elliott’s mind; though his years did not permit him to mount the keep with me, and enjoy the commanding scene from that elevation. Our return by the flourishing village of Wath-upon-Dearne and Darfield, was an agreeable

variation of our route. In one of the treasured scraps received from him, he says—‘If I live till summer, I could like to revisit Conisborough with you. A result of our visit is a long poem, which I think my best. Edlington Wood, I am told, is worth a visit.’ The Poem alluded to is ‘Etheline.’ A loose remark of mine, about the Don valley appearing like the bed of an ancient lake, he told me, originated the conception of the poem. None of the newspaper critics, not even the local ones, admit any merit in this poem. I know none, with the fatal facility of the octosyllabic measure, of more sustained strength and beauty. On my last visit he spoke of his probable Biography for which he has collected much matter. He had heard of the life of poor Keats by R. M. Milnes—fortunately, I had secured the work, and sent it—and the mode of allowing Keats’s correspondence and writings to tell the tale of his life, met his approbation.

“T. LISTER.”

I subjoin the following extract from Mr. Lister’s note-book, for the year 1836:—

“I was first introduced to Elliott by Charles Pember-ton, the graceful elocutionist, the fiery-souled patriot. Since that time, months elapsed without my seeing Elliott again. However, I took the privilege of kindred feeling, though low in its stamp, and made bold to visit him in his own abode. Our presuppositions of a person’s character, from his works, are often fallacious; one would hardly expect, from the bold and fiery spirit stamped on his writings, to meet a man of mild speech and urbane manners. But when his heart glows with his subject, especially in recitation, whether of his own impassioned lines, or the strains of some of those worthies whom he worships as stars of song, his features kindle into energy; his eyes, otherwise somewhat sunken and grey, glisten with rapture; and his voice assumes a rich and tuneful accent, characterizing

expressly the subject, on which his powers are awakened. One of his themes was 'Ribbledin,' or 'The Christening ;'—Ribbleden being a small mountain stream, near Sheffield, tumbling down a darkly-shaded ravine, and falling into the Rivilin, after a short but beautiful and romantic course ; and he read the poem with great effect. I have seen Ribbleden, and other scenes celebrated in his poems, with the poet himself, and shall never forget it. The conversation on these occasions was fully equal to his best compositions. It was, in fact, a second edition of his poetry. His language does not flow either in swift or copious streams ; but always with precision and force ; conveying solid, enlightened sentiments, strongly condensed, yet full and well defined ; so that at this distance of time I can give a slight delineation of them.

"Walking up Shirecliff Wood, where in a few moments, from the full glare of the town, we found ourselves as much shut out from the world as in the heart of the New Forest, these remarks fell from him :—'No one could have dreamed of a seclusion like this within bow-shot of the town. What a treat to the inhabitants, did they but know it ! This scene is worth thousands of pounds to Sheffield. Money can be no equivalent for pure pleasures like these. You surely would not part with your present tastes and feelings for a mine of wealth. I shall never forget the last time I came here with Charles Pemberton ;—that tree which overlooks the summit he climbed with as much agility, as if the act were as familiar to him as walking is to us. He clasped the stem with his sinewy limbs, set his toil-strung muscles in motion, and went up like a man of wire. How the view delighted him ! I, too, have my predilections for the spot. It is the scene of my "*Ranter*." From that tree I made my observations of the bold, striking scene around. I am attached to the place, from the associated idea. I know not that the "*Ranter*" is my best poem ; but it is the first that brought me into notice, and I am grateful to it, on that

account.' At another time the conversation turned on books most worthy to be read. 'Have you seen aught of Joanna Baillie's?' (No! I had no notion of her merits as a writer.) 'Oh! sir, you should read "De Montford;" it only wants a little to equal Shakespere, and that is almost as much as to say we have seen another god. It wants originality though; the leading idea, the plot of the story, is Southey's. Have you read any German work?' (No.) 'Well, you have a new country to open upon you. Read Schiller's "Wallenstein," translated by Coleridge. Such an original, and such a translation! Have you read any of Hazlitt?' (Only the choice specimens of him in 'Tait.') 'Not read Hazlitt, nor De Stael, nor Godwin, nor Schiller! I wonder how you got your taste to the standard it now reaches, and that it is not narrow and grovelling. The reading of Hazlitt was an epoch to me.'"

Note to Page 92:—

I have not been able to procure a sight of either of these poems, and am indebted to my friend Mr. John Fowler, of Sheffield, for the following extract from the '*Scotch Nationality*'—a poem, I am told, which virulently attacked the Scotch character, and of which Mr. Elliott was so heartily ashamed in latter times, that he bought up and destroyed all the copies that fell in his way.

A DAY DREAM.

"WHILE keenly blew the biting North,
He dream'd, his spirit wander'd forth.

He seem'd to trudge, beneath the pall
Of darkness supernatural.

The wind, that hurried sullenly,

Not o'er, but through a starless ocean,
(Like swift Time in Eternity,)

Whisper'd alone of life, or motion ;
And soon that wind, like one grown old,
Expir'd,—and all was gloom and cold.
Long then he roam'd the realms of night,
 his only light,
Which, glimmering pale on shadows, show'd
That death had pay'd with ice the road ;
And o'er a gulph of darkness lay
That narrow, strange, and dismal way.
He seem'd to move, with hollow tread.
O'er countless fragments of the dead,
 Yet could not trace
 Or limb, or face ;
No bone, no frozen winding-sheet,
 Crackled beneath his feet ;
No sound was there, no flutter'd wing,
No leaf, no form, no living thing,—
No beating heart but his,—no air ;
But cold that pierc'd the soul was there ;
And horror which no tongue can tell,
And silence insupportable.

'Twas depth unplum'd, 'twas gloom untrod,
'Twas shuddering thought alone with God !
And on he went alone,—alone—
And felt like life froz'n into stone ;
Or life, in earth and gloom laid low,
With pangs untold, with speechless woe,
With buried soul ; that living death,
That direst life, which heaves no breath,
Which would, but cannot, move or moan,
Yet feels, and bears, too weak to groan,
(While the worm pauses, as in awe,)
What life, unburied, hath not known,
And e'en abhors in thought to bear.

His tears were frozen in his heart :
He knew he was, but knew not where ;
He felt he was a thing apart
From all companionship,—a bird
That wings th' eternal calm unheard ;
On death's wide waste the conscious one ;
A flag above the waves, with none
To tell that ship and crew are gone ;
A sad memorial, never read ;

A meteor in the eyeless gloom;
 A blind, endanger'd wretch, unled,
 Who would have flown on the lightning's wing
 To clasp earth's foulest living thing.

He fear'd no worse, but curs'd his doom,
 And mutter'd, in his dreary mood,
 ' There is no hell but solitude ! ' ”

As a specimen of Elliott's prose composition I subjoin the following passage from his printed lectures, upon

COWPER AND BURNS.

“ I must now conclude, with a few observations on the lives and characters of the two great founders of the Modern School of Poetry. Perhaps no falsehood has been more frequently repeated, than that men of genius are less fortunate and less virtuous than other men; but the obvious truth, that they who attempt little are less liable to failure than they who attempt much, will account for the proverbial good luck of fools. In our estimate of the sorrows and failings of literary men, we forget that sorrow is the common lot; we forget, too, that the misfortunes and the errors of men of genius are recorded: and that, although their virtues may be utterly forgotten, their minutest faults will be sure to find zealous historians. And this is as it should be. Let the dead instruct us. But slanderers blame, in individuals, what belongs to the species. ‘ We women,’ says Clytemnestra, in *Æschylus*, when meditating the murder of her husband, and in reply to an attendant who was praising the gentleness of the sex, ‘ We women are—what we are.’ So is it with us all. Then, let every fault of men of genius be known; but let not hypocrisy come with a sponge, and wipe away their virtues.

“ Of the misfortunes of Cowper, we have all heard,

and certainly he was unfortunate, for he was liable to fits of insanity. But it might be said of him, that he was tended through life by weeping angels. Warm-hearted friends watched and guarded him with intense and unwearied solicitude; the kindest hearted of the softer sex, the best of the best, seem to have been born only to anticipate his wants. A glance at the world; will show us that his fate, though sad, was not saddest: for how many madmen are there, and how many men still more unfortunate than madmen, who have no living creature to aid, or soothe, or pity them! Think of Milton—'blind among enemies!'

"But the saddest incident in the life of Cowper remains to be told. In his latter days, he was pensioned by the crown—a misfortune which I can forgive to him, but not to destiny. It is consoling to think, that he was not long conscious of his degradation after the cruel kindness was inflicted on him. But why did not his friends—if weary of sustaining their kinsman stricken by the arrows of the Almighty, suffer him to perish in a *beggars'* madhouse! Would he had died in a ditch rather than this shadow had darkened over his grave! Burns was more fortunate in his death than Cowper: he lived selfsupported to the end. Glorious hearted Burns! Noble, but unfortunate Cowper!

"Burns was one of the few poets fit to be seen. It has been asserted that genius is a disease,—the malady of physical inferiority. It is certain, that we have heard of Pope, the hunchback: of Scott and Byron, the cripples: of the epileptic Julius Cæsar, who, it is said, never planned a great battle without going into fits: and of Napoleon, whom a few years of trouble killed: while Cobbett (a man of talent, not of genius) would have melted St. Helena, rather than have given up the ghost with a full belly. If Pope could have leaped over five-barred gates, he probably would not have written his inimitable sofa-and-lap dog poetry; but it does not follow, that he would not have written the 'Essay on Man;' and they who assert that genius is a

physical disease, should remember that, as true critics are more rare than true poets (we have only one in our language, William Hazlitt), so very tall and complete men are as rare as genius itself, a fact well known to persons who have the appointment of constables. And if it is undeniable that God wastes nothing, and that we, therefore, perhaps seldom find a gigantic body combined with a soul of Æolian tones: it is equally undeniable, that Burns was an exception to the rule—a man of genius, tall, strong, and handsome, as any man that could be picked out of a thousand at a country fair.

“But he was unfortunate we are told. Unfortunate! He was a tow-hackler who cleared six hundred pounds by the sale of his poems, of which sum he left two hundred pounds behind him, in the hands of his brother Gilbert: two facts which prove that he could neither be so unfortunate, nor so imprudent, as we are told he was.”

The following characteristic letters, by Elliott, were addressed to Mr. George Tweddell, editor of the “*Yorkshire Miscellany*,” and are amongst the very few which I have seen of his of sufficient general interest to be printed at present. The time has not yet come to collect the poet’s letters, although, in the meanwhile, these are welcome.

“*Great Houghton Common, near Barnsley,*
13th August, 1844.

“DEAR SIR,

I feel honoured by the receipt of a letter from such a man as George Tweddell. But it grieves me to say that I have no unpublished non-political poem, except one, which is 300 lines too long for any magazine, and having been written as an experiment to

combine the humorous and the beautiful, by a writer destitute of humour, is, of course, a failure. I will send you something soon, if I can bring my drape of a muse to her milk again. But what can you expect from an old bitch past bearing? I set her to work for you last night, and she conceived and brought forth certain glimmerings of moonshine, but of such a red, ferrety, anti corn-law hue, that I put them into the fire, without at all meekening the flame. She is like the painter who could paint nothing but red lions; if she tries to paint angels, it is plain at a glance that they come of the red lions, let the lady say what she will. Perhaps, the truth is, that I am humbled by the excellence of the poetry in your magazine. Who is Sylvan? I have long suspected that I am nobody in such company. The author of 'The Island of Demons,' gone to the Capulets, was assuredly somebody.

' Why should futurity give me or thee hopes,
When not a pinch of dust is left of Cheopes?'

Could we persuade some other great folks to suspect that they are not gods, but mortals of the useless species, our bread-taxers would be much wiser and happier devils than they are.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your's very truly,

"EBENEZER ELLIOTT."

"I am unwilling to depress you, yet I must in honesty say, that you cannot succeed without a miracle, and miracles are no longer wrought, except for the strong. No town out of London (Edinburgh excepted) has been able to support a magazine; not Manchester, nor Liverpool: it is whispered, not Dublin, though, like Edinburgh, a metropolis.

"E. E."

"Great Houghton, near Barnsley, 8th Jan., 1845

"DEAR SIR,

"If I have not sent you a contribution, it is because I have not been able to write one likely to be of service to you. The only things I have sent to the press during the last three years, are failures, extreme in their politics. Indeed, I did not leave Sheffield before my energies had left me. I need no bookseller, and have none, for the only book I buy is a weekly newspaper at second hand. But that I have read a few articles in the *Westminster Review*, I might say that I am newspaper-taught, and after passing a very active life, I cannot read without being ill. I am sorry you blame the people for not helping you: famine is helping hundreds of thousands of them into the grave, and the survivors will be more to be pitied than the dead. * * * I have tried in vain to obtain a subscriber or two for you. I live surrounded by several hundred acres of wood, nine miles from the nearest market-town, with three neighbours in the circuit of a mile, reading no book but *Old Moore*. With *Roseberry*—with the whole district of *Hambleton*, *Helmsley*, *Guisbrough*, *Rosedale*, *Eskdale*,—I am much better acquainted than I dare try to be with these police-haunted woods, and farmsteads tenanted by unliveried dependants of palaced paupers. Alter or omit the lines in your poem which refer to your detractors. Why stand on your defence without occasion? Live them down, or die them down.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your's truly,

"EBENEZER ELLIOTT."

"Great Houghton, 25th Feb., 1845,

"DEAR SIR,

"I thank you for your favour of the 20th instant, and gladly subscribe for your friend's '*Songs*

of the Heart,' heartily wishing him success, though the days of verse are numbered. My Sonnet on the Dearne is utterly worthless. In Tait there are one or two good ones of mine, addressed to our friend Thomas Lister. You will find him in many respects remarkable—a courageous, energetic, gristle-bodied man, with a bump of 'I'll have my own way,' bigger than a hen's egg, on his summit-ridge; his face is handsome, except the eyes, or rather their position, which is cavernous; the eyes themselves are keen and characteristic; his lips are beautiful. If there is truth in phrenology, his observant faculties should be strong and active, as his writings seem to prove. If I had known such a man forty years earlier, I could have climbed Ben Lomond with him; for, with the assistance of my hands, I could then have sprung over such a man. But well-a-day!

' My hair is grey, my blood is cold,
The minstrel is infirm and old.'

"I am, dear sir,
"Your's very truly,
"EBENEZER ELLIOTT."

"I shall be glad to see you in my den, but home-brewed I have none. When I married 'Ar Mester,' she agreed that we would have two bairns, a lad and a lass, and the best home brewed ale in England. She more than kept her promise as to the bairns, for they came so fast that they stopped the brewing."

The subsequent letters addressed to Mr. Isaac Ironsides, the leading Socialist of Sheffield, will shew how determined was the hatred with which Elliott regarded the Communistic ideas and Communism. I will insert them according to their dates.

"Sheffield, 10th March, 1834.

"SIR,

"My son Ben advises me to have nothing to do with your meeting. Why, he asks, should it be called? If your object is to prove me wrong and Owen right, why did you not do so long since, before all England? Instead of doing so, what have you done? You have used the worst fallacies, and the worst language, of your worst enemies, the Tories, for the purpose of bullying a man whom you cannot refute, and whom you would not attempt to bully, if you were not dupes. And who are now your allies? The Patrons of Blackwood—the bread-tax-eaters themselves! 'Why,' my son asks, 'should Ebenezer Elliott encourage a set of hulking idlers to come here with the money of the Charles-Street-Gang under their tongues, and an endless farrago of abuse and commonplace plausibilities at the end of them, all got by rote?' Is it worth a public meeting to give certain geese an opportunity of crowing like cocks, if a man, who so far from being a public speaker, despises both the babble and the babblers, should not be able, or willing, to outgabble half a dozen deluded fools, and perhaps half a dozen vile hirelings beside? Hirelings? Yes. You say your parent society has now plenty of money. Whence comes it? If you are sold, who bought you? Where are the accounts? I don't like mystery. My conduct in your society has been straightforward and undisguised, and you have suffered it to be misrepresented. But my opinions are before the public! And your barrister—the greatest goose of Manchester and Salford—has taken good care not to republish them. As to your plan of what you call Regeneration, the more impracticable it is the better, provided you *act* upon it, instead of *talking* about it. In all the circumstances—a late motion in the Commons on the Corn Laws, included—perhaps you cannot do better for all England, than follow the advice of Owen and Fielding. Do so, in sufficient numbers, and

the bread-tax-eaters, whose dupes you are, will awake with a start ! There will be no occasion then to ask, either you or them, to rid the Corn Laws ; they will be got rid of, with a vengeance."

In after years, Mr. Ironsides, who is a man of great integrity, and moreover the Diogenes of Sheffield, became Elliott's business agent, and was on friendly terms with the Poet as long as he lived, which the following letters will prove:—

" *Great Houghton, 29th September, 1847.*

"DEAR SIR,

"Your favour of the 21st. instant, with your correspondent's article on 'Railways and Bullionism,' reached me in a parcel from Sheffield on the 28th inst., and my house being full of visitors, I cannot give it at present the consideration which the vast importance of the subject demands. But I have attentively read the paper, and find that the writer is wrong from beginning to end. An issue of the stuff, which he is pleased to call money, might increase Railway speculation, and would enable some speculators to get out of their dirt-holes ; but it is capital,—not what is called money—that is wanted to complete Railways. A few years ago, railways offered the only feasible investment for surplus capital in Food-taxed-Britain ; but so slowly was that surplus produced, that even the *Midland* was executed with difficulty. Yet now—when the comparative safety with which accommodation bills, endorsed by Joint Stock Banks, can be *rediscounted*, has facilitated undue speculation, he would increase the evil ! He talks too, of one pound notes, *circulating* with sovereigns ! Can you tell me where the sovereigns would be found, and at what price purchaseable in six months after the appearance of the notes ? I can tell you who

would take good care of them, and sell them at a profit (30 per cent, perhaps), especially if Tony Lumpkins' cousins wanted, (what they always want) a foreign war. Thank God the notes would not do much throat-cutting out of Britain ! It is painful to think that the only use he makes of his free-trade argument is to sustain a sham. Now free-trade means 'Something for Something,' but accommodation bills, if receivable by the taxgatherer (which is all that your friend's security implies), means an increase of taxation ! and finally '*Nothing* for Something,' as poor Louis XVith's red necklace dismally proved. But the fact suggests a very important question."

" *Great Houghton, 20th September, 1848.*

"DEAR SIR,

"I shall never be able to repay your kindness. You have behaved like a father to me, and whenever I speak of you in future, my speech shall be in this wise, 'Our Father Ironsides !'

"I have delayed answering your favour of the 10th August, in the hope that I should have good news to tell you, and give my opinion of 'England the Civilizer,' the brave, wise, and most tolerant authoress of which extraordinary book, deserves and shall have a re-perusal before I presume to pronounce on its merits (! !)

"If you can spare the bath please place it at my debit, as it will be useful to my family. I ceased to use it on Saturday last. It has driven the blood, accumulated by the straining, from the seat to the back, whence I hope the constitution will be able to distribute it through the system. I shall recover I am told. The truth is, I improve desperately. I suffer great pain, and after losing more than twenty-eight pounds in weight, I continue to lose weight at the rate of about one pound weekly. You cannot fatten calves in

that way. If I am not removed suddenly, I shall last till April next.

"I wish to be buried in my skin, at the foot of Lord Galway's ash tree here; my folks are all for holy ground and costs. Rotherham church yard being full of corruption, and one of our clergymen happening to be here, I have been trying to bargain with him for a grave at Darfield. Could you think it? Sinking the offal, it will cost ten shillings for the use of the ground alone.

"If you know any poor devil who meditates rusticide, (or death by living in the country,) kill him with his granted wish; sell him the estate you have bought. Though as a country residence near Sheffield, it must be dog-cheap at the price you are to pay for it, you will not like it. The approach to it is a *thoroughfare crossing your threshold!* If you have bought the rising ground beyond the wall, in front of the cottage, you may enclose a portion for lawn, &c., and so remove the road a few yards from you, and be able, right and left, to see approaching rascality, which will be a great satisfaction! Help-seeking friends, also, will visit you, under pretence of seeing Wiming, and desolation beyond it; but you will not be able to say, with the earnestness of the smoke dried rhymer—

" 'I thank ye, billows of a granite sea.
That the bribed plough, defeated, halts below!
And thanks, majestic Barrenness, to thee,
For one grim region in a world of woe,
Where tax-grown wheat, and paupers will not grow.'

"I have before me a wood-cut of great George the Man! Stephenson. The expression of the countenance is more than beautiful; almost divine—godlike, in its calm and thoughtful simplicity. If Phidias had left us such a head and face of Jupiter, the world would never have tired of praising it.

"Remember us to your excellent wife; and if you

see sweet sister Kate, tell her she will hear from me in a few days."

"Great Houghton, 20th November, 1848.

"DEAR SIR,

"I return your three books, and show my gratitude by advising you to lend no more. At Sheffield, I made it a rule to lend the book that instructed me. When I came hither, intending to use my books, I found that I had lent and lost the very books which I most wanted.

"I have been much pleased with the 'Irish Lyrics,' and am a thought richer for reading them, having contrived to steal a thought from one of them without robbing the author.

"I hardly know whether Henry Sutton's book or Fanny Wrights' is the more extraordinary. May they ever continue to be singular exhibitions of talent, labouring to be absurd! He, I am happy to believe, will not be able to make man in the image of his conceit, nor she in that of her bigotry.

"Puzzled by '*England the Civilizer*,' I gave it, I am sorry to say, a second and very careful reading. Two-thirds of it, at least, consist of wearisome repetitions; explanations, which do not explain, and pompous truisms, not worth asserting. She exchanges one word for another, and thinks she has *done* something. Instead of government, she says, we are to have administration—government using *things*, and administration, *men*: what the latter are to use, except *things*, I cannot see. The only point that she proves is, that (not England but) Italy, has been the civilizer; and she repudiates the only power that ever did, or can improve the condition of mankind; that Power, whose last invented tool,—the rail,—has done more in ten years for the emancipation of the human race, than unaided agriculture (which means finger-grubbing for pig-nuts) could in ten thousand."

"Great Houghton, 2nd January, 1849.

"DEAR SIR,

"A plague on all your houses ! Your Hall of Science, your Chapel of Jabez, your Church of Peter, your House that Jack built, and the House that Martin stole. The result of Neddy's generalship will be a 6s. duty. For this end, (affirming the deadly principle of protection) the monopolists have retained the one shilling duty. That duty,—though as a revenue duty it will only produce £400,000 a year, even if our yearly imports are 8,000,000 of quarters—will be a class-tax of £2,500,000 a year ; and consequently a six shillings duty will be a similar tax of £15,000,000 ! Lord have mercy on us, or ere long England will be (for years to come) from sea to sea, a sea of blood and fire. Why fight a battle, useless if won,—and, if lost fatal ?"

"Hargate Hill, Barnsley, 5th Oct., 1849.

"DEAR SIR,

"I thank you for your favour of the 2nd., covering the balance of account, to 30th of Sept. last, £20 2s. 6d.

"Though I despise the nonsense of Communism, think not that I despair of man's federation. No, brother ! read, as I have done, (for I have had the honour of reading the proof sheets), in, I believe, the forthcoming number of the Westminster Review, an article on 'Human Progress,' one of the most eloquent and encouraging productions ever written. The author is perhaps our greatest living mechanician, (and certainly one of our greatest living benefactors, of his kind) a Communist, worthy of any good cause.

"In his choice of an habitation, he has proved the adaptability of communal principles to individual taste. Living in the kernel of London, he breathes a pure atmosphere, commanding from his windows, per-

haps, the grandest, and loveliest prospect in the world ; and with all the advantages of the highest civilization, within a few yards around him, enjoys (for to him it is enjoyment) the absolute solitude of an anchorite ! He lives on the eighth and highest landing, of a huge pile of buildings, a portion of the roof of which is his yard ; the infinite blue kisses his noble forehead ; and beneath him flows the Thames, with its universe of life and motion.

“ If you will contrive to quote the above, at a public meeting, you will advertise the book, and give the good cause a shove ; for all your ‘ shots ’ are reported — I grieve to find you spinning long yarns.

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Yours very truly

“ EBENEZER ELLIOTT.”

THE END.

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